

Patient Information Sheet: Joint Aspiration Under Ultrasound (US) Guidance

What is Joint Aspiration?

Joint aspiration (also called **arthrocentesis**) is a medical procedure used to remove fluid from a joint. This can help relieve pain, reduce swelling, or diagnose the cause of joint symptoms.

Why is it Done?

Your doctor may recommend a joint aspiration to:

- Relieve joint pressure caused by fluid buildup
- Diagnose the cause of joint pain or swelling (e.g., infection, gout, arthritis)
- Guide treatment decisions
- Inject medications like corticosteroids (in some cases)

What is Ultrasound-Guided Aspiration?

Ultrasound guidance uses sound waves to help the doctor see the joint and surrounding tissues in real-time. This improves the accuracy and safety of the aspiration procedure, especially for deeper or more complex joints.

Before the Procedure

- **Medications:** Inform your doctor if you are taking blood thinners (e.g., warfarin, aspirin, or clopidogrel) or antibiotics.
- **Allergies:** Let us know if you have allergies to local anesthetics, iodine, or latex.
- **Eating and Drinking:** No special preparation is usually needed. You may eat and drink as normal unless told otherwise.

What to Expect During the Procedure

- The skin over the joint is cleaned with antiseptic and the joint will be covered with a sterile drape.
- A local anesthetic is injected to numb the area.
- An ultrasound probe is used to guide a thin needle into the joint.
- Fluid is withdrawn using a syringe.
- A small bandage is placed over the site.

Duration: The procedure usually takes 10–20 minutes.

Risks and Complications

Joint aspiration is generally safe, especially under ultrasound guidance. However, possible risks include:

- Minor bleeding or bruising at the needle site
- Joint pain or swelling after the procedure
- Infection (rare)
- Allergic reaction to anesthetic or antiseptic
- Very rarely, damage to nearby structures

After the Procedure

- You may experience mild soreness or swelling. Applying an ice pack can help.
- Avoid strenuous activity involving the joint for 3-4 days.
- Keep the bandage clean and dry.
- Contact your healthcare provider if you experience:
 - Increasing pain or swelling
 - Redness or warmth around the joint
 - Fever or chills
 - Drainage from the needle site

Follow-Up

The joint fluid may be sent to a lab for analysis. Your doctor will discuss the results and next steps with you.
