

RUH

PleurX catheter insertion


Name

Hospital Number

Date of Birth

Date of insertion

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1. What is a PleurX Catheter?

A PleurX catheter is a specially designed small tube inserted in the chest to drain fluid from around your lungs easily whenever it is needed. It avoids the need for repeated injections and chest tubes every time drainage of fluid is needed. The drainage can be performed at home either by a nurse or a relative or friend, whichever suits you. The PleurX catheter is a soft flexible tube that is smaller than a pencil, which remains permanently inside the chest and passes out through the skin. There is a valve on the outer end of the tube to prevent fluid leaking out of the tube.

2. Why do I need a PleurX Catheter?

The pleural space consists of two thin membranes – one lining the lung and the other lining the chest wall. Between these layers, there is a very small space which is usually almost dry. In your case, fluid has collected in this space so that the lung cannot function properly, making you short of breath.

3. What can be done to help me when this happens?

Draining away the fluid collection helps relieve breathlessness for a period of time, but the fluid then often re-collects making you short of breath again. Whilst it is possible to have repeated drainage of fluid, it can be uncomfortable and means many inconvenient trips to hospital. The PleurX catheter is a way of allowing fluid to be repeatedly drained without you having to come to the hospital and without you having to have repeated fluid drainage procedures.

4. How is the PleurX catheter put in my chest?

The tube will be put into your chest on the respiratory ward. You will be asked to either sit or lie in a comfortable position by your doctor. You may have an ultrasound examination of your chest prior to the PleurX catheter insertion.

Once you are resting comfortably, the skin will be cleaned with a sterile cleaning fluid to kill any bacteria; this fluid often feels cold. A local anesthetic is then injected into the skin, to numb the place where the PleurX catheter will be placed. This can feel mildly painful, but the pain passes off quickly.

Your doctor will then make two small cuts in the numb area of skin and gently open a path for the PleurX catheter. This should not be painful, although you may feel some pressure or tugging. The PleurX catheter is then gently eased into the chest.

5. Will it be painful?

Local anaesthetic is injected into the skin before the drain is sited, so that you do not feel the catheter being inserted. At the end of the procedure the chest may feel 'bruised' or 'sore' for about a week. We can provide you with pain killing tablets to relieve this discomfort if required.

6. How long do I have to stay in hospital?

Provided there have been no problems, the catheter insertion is done as a day case and after a short stay at the hospital you will be free to go home. You will be required to have a chest x-ray after the procedure. Someone will need to drive you home.

7. How does the drain stay in position?

PleurX catheters are designed to be a permanent solution to the problem of pleural fluid and therefore usually remain in position permanently (though they can be removed if necessary). There is a soft cuff around the tube which is positioned under the skin which ensures the drain is secure.

Two stitches will be put in when your tube is inserted. The District nurse will remove these 10 days after the insertion.

8. Who will drain the fluid from my PleurX catheter once it is in place?

Drainage of the fluid is a straightforward procedure.

We will arrange for a Practice or District Nurse to do this for you at home. We will make these arrangements so you will not need to organise any of this for yourself. If you or a relative are willing to be taught how to drain the fluid, this can be done at home by the District nurse.

9. How often can I drain fluid and how often do I need to do this?

When your catheter is inserted the doctor will remove most of the fluid from your chest cavity at the same time. The rate the fluid re-accumulates varies between people and some patients need daily drainage whilst others require only weekly drainage. You can drain fluid as often or as infrequently as is needed. The Doctor will advise how often it is to be drained initially.


10. How will drainage bottles be supplied to me?

The District nurse involved in your care will be informed of how to order the drainage bottles (you do not need to do anything). She may then store these at your home or bring one each time she comes to do the drainage.

It is sensible to take 2-4 bottles with you if you are ever admitted to hospital in the future, to ensure that there are no delays in your pleural drainages while you are an inpatient.

11. Are there any risks with PleurX catheter insertion?

In most cases, the insertion of a PleurX catheter and its use in treatment is a routine and safe procedure. However, like all medical procedures, PleurX catheters can cause problems. All of these can be treated by your doctors and nurses:

- Most people get a degree of pain from their PleurX catheter in the first week. We will provide you with pain killing medication to control this if required.
 - Sometimes PleurX catheters can become infected but this is uncommon (affecting about one in 50 patients). Your doctor will thoroughly clean the area before putting in a PleurX catheter to try and prevent this and we will teach you how to keep your catheter clean. Tell your GP or District nurse if you feel feverish or notice any increasing pain or redness around the chest drain.
 - Very rarely, during its insertion, the PleurX catheter may accidentally damage a blood vessel and cause serious bleeding. This probably only affects about one in 500 patients. Unfortunately, if it does happen it can be a serious problem which may require an operation to stop it. Your doctors and nurses will do everything they can to avoid this problem.
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12. Are there any risks associated with long term PleurX catheter use?

Generally indwelling PleurX catheters are very well tolerated in the long term.

- The main risk is infection entering the chest along the tube. This risk is minimised by good catheter care and hygiene. The District nurse will advise you on how to look after your catheter.
- Sometimes cancer tissue can affect the area around the PleurX catheter. Please let your doctors know if you develop a lump, or any pain, around your catheter in the weeks after it is inserted. If this problem does develop, your doctor will advise you on appropriate treatment.

13. Can I wash and shower normally?

Initially after insertion there will be a dressing placed on the catheter and we advised you to keep this dry until the stitch is removed ten days later. Providing the site is then clean and dry, you will be able to bath and shower normally. After a month it is even possible to go swimming.

14. When is the PleurX catheter taken out?

PleurX catheters are designed to remain in position permanently. However, sometimes the fluid drainage from the chest dries up and the catheter is no longer needed. In this situation the catheter can be removed as a day case procedure.

For further information

If you would like any further information about this procedure please telephone the Lung Nurse Specialists at the Royal United Hospital.

Your feedback is encouraged

We are keen to make a PleurX catheter insertion as straightforward and comfortable as we possibly can. Please feel free to make any suggestions, for improvements to the catheter insertion process and/or the written information, to the Lung Nurse Specialists.

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