Ovarian Cyst Aspiration

This leaflet tells you about the procedure known as an ovarian cyst aspiration. It is not meant to replace informed discussion between you and your doctor, but can act as a starting point for such a discussion.

What is an Ovarian Cyst Aspiration?
A thin needle is passed through the skin, under local anaesthetic, into the cyst arising from your ovary, and the fluid is drained. The needle may be passed through the skin of your abdomen, or using a small ultrasound probe to guide its position within your vagina.

Why do I need an Ovarian Cyst Aspiration?
Simple ovarian cysts, generally found in younger women, may undergo torsion (twisting), haemorrhage or rupture if they are larger than about 5 cm in diameter. Removal may be advised to avoid these complications. Surgery or laparoscopy may not be necessary if the cyst fluid is drained by this procedure called ‘ultrasound guided needle aspiration’.

What are the benefits...?
Draining the cyst fluid may avoid complications, and may help with other symptoms.

..And any alternatives?
An alternative procedure would be open surgery or laparoscopic (key-hole) surgery.

Who has made the decision?
Your consultant who saw you in the clinic has decided this procedure may be in your best interest. If after discussion with your doctors you do not want the procedure, you can decide against it.

Where will the procedure take place?
The procedure will take place in the ultrasound department, using the same sort of scan that you have already had.

You are asked to attend the Women’s Health Unit a few hours before the procedure to make sure there are no problems, and you will rest there for a few hours afterwards.

Who will be doing the Ovarian Cyst Aspiration?
A specially trained doctor called a Radiologist. Radiologists have special expertise in using imaging equipment.

How do I prepare for an Ovarian Cyst Aspiration?
There is no special preparation, but we do need to know if you are taking drugs to thin your blood (Anticoagulants such as Warfarin), or if you may be pregnant.

What actually happens during an Ovarian Cyst Aspiration?
The Radiologist will repeat the ultrasound scan of your abdomen, perhaps also with an internal vaginal scan, to be sure the cyst is still there and has not changed. This will allow the Radiologist to determine the best, safest way to drain the cyst fluid.

The skin is cleaned, and local anaesthetic injected into the skin of your abdomen or vagina.

A very thin but long needle, about the same size as the needle used for taking blood samples, is pushed into the cyst, using the ultrasound probe to guide its position, and the cyst fluid is drained into a syringe. When the cyst is empty or collapsed, the needle is removed.

Will it hurt?
Local anaesthetic is used, so you will be awake. The procedure should not be painful.
How long will it take?
The procedure will take about 20 minutes to complete.

What happens afterwards?
You will be taken back to St. Mary’s Ward, where you will be observed for a few hours, and you may go home later in the day.

Are there any risks or complications?
The procedure is safe and generally well tolerated. There may be some discomfort, controlled with local anaesthetic, or a dull ache following the procedure which may last a few hours.

Bleeding into the abdomen or vagina may occur, and can be associated with pain. It should stop quickly and need no treatment. Vaginal bleeding lasting a few hours is common if the cyst was drained internally and will stop by itself.

The bowel or bladder may be punctured, but the needle is thin and this should not cause any problem.

In some circumstances it may not be possible to complete the procedure. For example it may not be possible to drain the cyst fluid if it is very thick, or the procedure may not be possible if access to the cyst is too difficult.

After the aspiration the cyst may recur, and refill with fluid, or new cysts may develop. It is not possible to know in advance whether this will happen.

Who can I contact for further information?
This leaflet should have answered some of your questions, but remember this is only a starting point for discussion about your treatment with the doctors looking after you. If you have any questions or you are worried about anything, please speak to your doctor or contact the Imaging Department on 01246 512627.