

Ultrasound – Pleural Effusion Evaluation

PURPOSE:

To evaluate the chest cavity for the presence and characterization of pleural fluid.

SCOPE:

Applies to all ultrasound studies performed for the evaluation of pleural effusions in Imaging Services / Radiology

INDICATIONS:

- Signs, symptoms, or other imaging studies suggestive of pleural effusion
- Conditions associated with pleural effusion
- Follow up known pleural effusion

CONTRAINDICATIONS:

No absolute contraindications

EQUIPMENT:

Linear or curved array transducers with a frequency range of 5-9 MHz that maximizes image resolution in the near field-of-view. Sector array transducers may be required for obtaining an adequate intercostal acoustic window. A low-frequency curvilinear probe may be required for appropriate penetration and resolution depending on patient's body habitus.

PATIENT PREPARATION:

- None

EXAMINATION:

GENERAL GUIDELINES:

A complete examination includes evaluation of the pleural cavity for free or loculated fluid.

EXAM INITIATION:

- Introduce yourself to the patient
- Verify patient identity using patient name and DOB
- Explain test
- Obtain patient history including symptoms. Enter and store data page.
- Place patient in sitting or lateral decubitus positioning.

TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS:

- Review any prior imaging, making note of associated abnormalities requiring evaluation.
- Preferable position is sitting upright, especially for a planned thoracentesis. Otherwise, lateral decubitus positing may be attempted with the patient turned away from the side under evaluation (left lateral decubitus for right-sided chest imaging). Document patient positioning on images.
- Document the extent and location of any fluid identified

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DOCUMENTATION:

- Longitudinal images:
 - Representative images through multiple adjacent intercostal spaces
- Transverse images:
 - Representative images
- Cine images to document mobile debris, atelectatic lung, or other mobile structures
- Data page(s)

PROCESSING:

- Review examination images and data
- Export all images to PACS
- Document relevant history and any study limitations

REFERENCES:

ACR-SPR-SRU Practice Guideline (Revised 2011)

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REVISION HISTORY:

SUBMITTED BY:	David T. Fetzer, MD	Title	Medical Director
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