

Ethanol Ablation of Cystic Thyroid Nodule

About your procedure

This handout explains ethanol ablation, which is used to treat cystic thyroid nodules. It explains how to prepare and what to expect during and after your procedure.

A *cystic thyroid nodule* is a fluid-filled lump in the thyroid gland. Your doctor has decided that a procedure called ethanol ablation is the best treatment plan for you. This is a simple procedure that uses alcohol (ethanol) to shrink or get rid of the nodule.



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Before the Procedure

Pre-Procedure Appointment: You may have an ultrasound to check the size and type of thyroid nodule. Sometimes, a fine needle aspiration (FNA) is done to make sure it is not cancer.

- This procedure is **not** the right treatment for thyroid cancer. If your care team thinks your nodule may be cancerous, they will talk with you about the next tests and treatment options.

Medications: Continue taking your regular medications unless your doctor gives you different instructions. Please note these two important instructions:

1. **STOP** taking all *NSAIDs* 72 hours (3 days) before your procedure. NSAIDs (Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drug) are a type of pain and anti-inflammatory medicines, including ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), naproxen (Aleve), and aspirin (Excedrin). Talk to your care team about the medications you use.
2. If you are on blood thinners (e.g., aspirin, warfarin, or clopidogrel), tell your doctor as soon as possible. You may need to stop taking them a few days before your procedure.

Support Person: Bring a responsible adult with you to your procedure. They will need to help you get home.



Most patients notice their symptoms improve within a few weeks after this procedure.

Day of the Procedure

How should I prepare?

- You can eat a light meal before the procedure.
- Please shower before your procedure. Wash the area around your neck very well.
- Take 1000 mg of acetaminophen (Tylenol) 1 hour before the procedure. You can buy this without a prescription at any store. If you are allergic to acetaminophen, talk with your care team about other options.

When should I arrive?

- Arrive at the clinic at least 30 minutes before your scheduled appointment time. Your support person should be with you at check-in.

What will happen during my procedure?

- You will lie down comfortably on an exam table.
- We will clean your neck to lower the risk of infection.
- You may feel discomfort or pressure during the procedure, but we will give you local anesthesia (numbing medicine) to reduce your pain. You will get *topical* (on your skin) numbing medication, and then a numbing injection (shot).
- We will use a small needle to remove fluid from the nodule. Then we will inject a small amount of ethanol (alcohol) into the nodule to shrink it.
- The ethanol will be removed 15 minutes after the injection.
- The procedure usually takes about 30 to 45 minutes.
- We will monitor you for about 15-30 minutes after the procedure to make sure there are no urgent problems.



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After the Procedure

Pain Management: You may have mild discomfort or soreness in your neck area. You may take over-the-counter acetaminophen (Tylenol) to help with your pain. Ask your doctor how much you should take.

Swelling: You may have some swelling or bruising around the procedure site. This should get better after a few days.

Activity: It is safe to go back to your normal activities. However, for 48 hours after your procedure:

- Avoid vigorous or difficult activities
- Avoid any movements that put strain on your neck, such as heavy lifting.

Follow-up Appointment: We will schedule an ultrasound **4 to 6 weeks** after the procedure to see how well the treatment worked. We may plan more treatments for you if needed.

How effective will this treatment be?

For most patients, ethanol ablation usually works to shrink or remove cystic thyroid nodules.

Within a few weeks, you should notice your symptoms getting better. This may include easier swallowing, less neck pressure, and a smaller nodule. However, it may take several weeks or months to see the full effect. Some patients may need another ethanol injection for the best results.

Possible Side Effects and Complications

This procedure is generally safe, but all medical treatments have possible risks and complications. These risks include:

- **Mild pain or swelling** at the injection site (usually gets better after a few days).
- **Bruising** in the neck area.
- **Infection** (rare)
- **Throat discomfort or hoarseness** (in rare cases, this can be caused by irritation of the vocal cords).
- **Bleeding or hematoma** (bruising) at the injection site.
- **Feeling lightheaded, dizzy, or “drunk”**

If you experience severe pain, difficulty breathing, severe swelling, or significant bruising after the procedure, go to the nearest emergency room.

When to Call Your Doctor

Call us right away if you have:

- **Fever** (over 100.4°F or 38°C).
- **Severe pain** or discomfort that does not get better when you take pain medication.
- **Difficulty swallowing or hoarseness.**
- **Signs of infection:** Redness, warmth, or increased swelling at the injection site.

If you have any questions or concerns about your procedure, medications, or follow-up care, please contact us any time, including after hours. Making sure you are safe and comfortable during and after your procedure is our top priority.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

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