Light's Criteria

Pleural effusion: exudate or transudate?

Protein

$$\frac{\text{Pleural fluid protein}}{\text{Serum protein}}$$

> 0.5

or

LDH

$$\frac{\text{Pleural fluid LDH}}{\text{Serum LDH}}$$

> 0.6

or

Pleural fluid LDH

$$\frac{\text{Pleural fluid LDH}}{\text{Upper limit of normal serum LDH}}$$

> 2/3

EXUDATE

Meets AT LEAST ONE

Inflammatory processes: infection, malignancy, pulmonary embolism

TRANSUDATE

Meets NONE

Mechanical causes: heart failure, cirrhosis, nephrotic syndrome

Very sensitive: on diuretics, a transudate may be labeled as an exudate