

# Bronchoscopy

## Patient Information Sheet

Your doctor has advised you to undergo a bronchoscopy. This pamphlet should explain to you what is involved, what the complications are and what to expect on the day of the procedure.

### What is a bronchoscopy?

A bronchoscopy is an examination of the breathing passages (airways) of your lungs and is performed to diagnose a variety of lung disorders. The procedure is done using a thin tube-like instrument called a bronchoscope with a light and camera at its tip. Through the bronchoscope, samples of mucous or lung or abnormal tissue within the lung can be biopsied and sent to the laboratory.

### Before the procedure

Your lung doctor will assess you before the procedure, explain the procedure to you and ask you to sign a consent form. You will be admitted to the endoscopy department on the day of the procedure.

It is required that you are fasted (not eat food or drink) prior to the procedure. Please ensure you are fully aware when you must fast from. Some medications, especially blood thinners may need to be withheld for a few days.

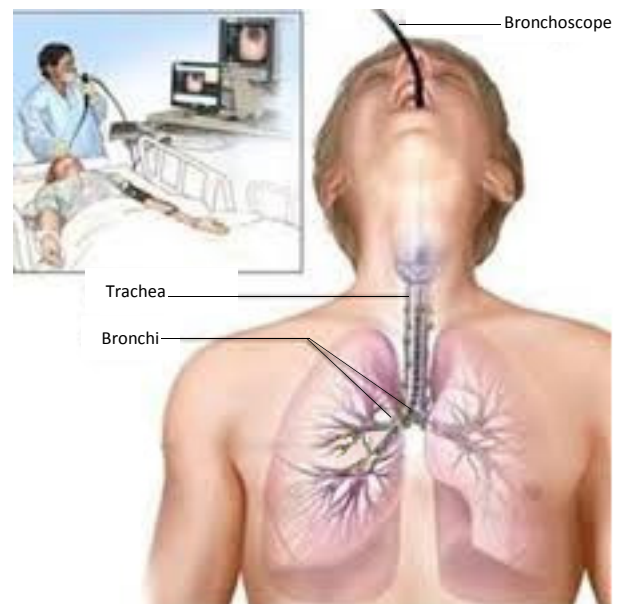
### What happens during the bronchoscopy?

A cannula (a small plastic tube) is first inserted in one of your veins and a local anaesthetic is sprayed into your nose and throat to make these areas numb. This medication tastes very bitter and creates a strange sensation in the mouth. Oxygen is then connected to you via a mask or via tubes inserted into your nose and medicine is

injected through the cannula into your vein to make you feel sleepy.

The doctor then inserts a bronchoscope through either one of your nostrils or through your mouth. Local anaesthetic is sprayed onto your voice box and into your lungs to numb these areas. This might make you cough initially but settles after a few minutes.

The doctor then inspects the airway tubes and takes samples as necessary.



### After the procedure

Afterwards, you will be taken to the recovery bay to recover from the procedure. It is normal to have a sore throat and a cough. You will be monitored for a few hours.

Depending on your recovery, you may be able to go home the same day or require an overnight stay in hospital. The doctor will tell you how the procedure went. Laboratory results take about 5-10 days to return. You

will normally be seen as an outpatient to get the results.

## Alternatives to having a bronchoscopy

**Sputum samples** can be coughed up and sent to the laboratory but only during bronchoscopy can your doctor actually visualise abnormalities and take samples directly from the source of the problem.

**Other tests and procedures** such as x-rays, CT scans and lung function tests give the doctor limited information. Bronchoscopy increases the likelihood of obtaining a definitive diagnosis.

## Risks and complications

Bronchoscopy is a very safe procedure. However, as with all procedures, complications can occur.

- ☐ **Sore throat and coughing.** Due to irritation where the bronchoscope was inserted. This should improve over a few days.
- ☐ **Low oxygen levels.** Are treated with mask or nasal prong oxygen.
- ☐ **Bleeding.** Minor bleeding from the biopsy site is common. Less commonly, more significant bleeding occurs and requires further interventions.
- ☐ **Pneumothorax.** If you are having a transbronchial lung biopsy, the lung can

be punctured resulting in an air leak. This occurs in about 20% of patients. Most (80%) resolve without treatment. A minority require a chest tube to drain the leaked air. If this occurs, you are likely to have to stay in hospital for a few days. Chest X-rays are performed during and after the procedure to monitor for pneumothorax.

- ☐ **Chest infection.** There is a small risk of lung infection after a bronchoscopy. This would require antibiotics, either tablets or through a drip depending on the severity.
- ☐ **Anaesthetic complications.** During sedation and anaesthesia, increased strain on the heart can result in abnormal rhythms or even a heart attack. Stroke can also occur. These are very uncommon.
- ☐ **Wheezing.** Temporary narrowing of the airways can cause wheezing or coughing. This usually resolves by itself or treated with asthma medication.
- ☐ **Fever and chills.** It is common to develop a fever and/or chills the night of the procedure. This is best managed with paracetamol and should settle within 24 hours.
- ☐ **Life threatening complications.** These are extremely rare.

I, (patient's name) .....  
have discussed having a bronchoscopy with my doctor and understand the nature of the procedure, alternative options and risks of the procedure.

Signature of patient .....

Date .....

Doctors signature .....