What Do PFTs Mean for You?

Keep in mind that quality of life is not determined by the test results.

Each patient is unique and many people live fulfilling lives with limited lung function. The key is to explore ways to maintain or improve quality of life.

Methods used to accomplish this include:

- Exercise
- Breathing techniques
- Proper medications
- Social and emotional support

Pulmonary rehabilitation programs and support groups are valuable sources of information.

Develop a partnership with your physician. Good communication is essential. Don’t be afraid to ask questions.

Your Appointment

Date: ____________________________

Time: ____________________________

Bring any questions you might have. Use the space below to write questions to bring with you to your appointment.

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Pulmonary Function Testing

Testing How Well You Breathe

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9-29-16
**Introduction**

Pulmonary Function Testing (PFT) is a series of breathing tests performed by a trained pulmonary function technician. These tests are typically conducted in a hospital or clinic setting.

PFTs are ordered by a physician to evaluate how well the lungs work. PFTs measure:

- How much air the lungs can hold
- How well air moves in and out of the lungs
- How well the lungs and blood exchange oxygen and carbon dioxide

Physicians use PFTs to:

- Aid in the diagnoses of lung disease
- Measure the severity of lung disease
- Assess how well prescribed treatments are working

**Before Testing**

**DO NOT TAKE ANY BREATHING MEDICATIONS 6 HOURS PRIOR TO TESTING**

- Oxygen may be used, if needed
- Avoid alcohol and caffeine
- Stop smoking 8 to 12 hours prior to testing
- Wear loose clothing that does not restrict breathing
- Eating a light meal and drinking limited fluids is permitted

**Testing**

The PFT technician coaches the patient during the test. The patient sits in a chair or in a clear glass box, similar to a telephone booth, and breathes through a mouthpiece. Nose clips are worn so the patient breathes through the mouth. The technician instructs the patient when to remove the nose clips. If tired, breaks may be taken between tests.

**If experiencing any of the following, please report:**

- Common cold or cold-like symptoms
- Increased shortness of breath
- Sore mouth
- Chest, arm or jaw pain
- Feeling fatigued or dizzy

**Commonly Used Terms**

- **Normal results:** based on a person’s age, height and gender and are expressed as a percentage of the predicted lung capacity; the prediction takes into account the patient’s age, height and sex

- **Spirometry:** a type of pulmonary function test that measures the amount of air taken in (volume) and exhaled as a function of time

- **Diffusing capacity:** a measure of how well oxygen and carbon dioxide are transferred (diffused) between the lungs and the blood

- **Lung volume:** the percentage of air that lungs can hold at any given time

- **Bronchial challenge test:** used to determine bronchial hyper-responsiveness to either rigorous exercise, inhalation of cold/dry air or with a pharmeceutical agent such as methacholine

- **Post Bronchodilator Test (Post BD):** aids in diagnosing asthma versus COPD; to assess the reversibility of a particular condition, a bronchodilator is adminstered before performing another round of tests for comparison

The information found on these pages is not meant to provide specific medical advice or to replace the continuing care, guidance and supervision provided by your physician and other members of your health care team. Always seek proper medical advice and maintain regular communication with your physician.