

**This leaflet has been written to provide information about a basic breathing test (Spirometry). We hope it answers some of the questions or concerns you may have. It is not intended to replace talking with medical or nursing staff.**

### **What is Spirometry?**

Spirometry is a basic breathing test which measures the amount of air that you can blow out. Your GP/Practice Nurse has requested this test to assess your lung function following your visit to the surgery.



**Spirometer**

### **How is it done?**

The physiologist performing the test will measure your height and weight, then ask you to sit in front of the equipment (Spirometer). You will be asked to take a deep breath in and blow into the Spirometer as hard and fast as you can until your lungs are completely empty. This routine will be repeated to ensure the results are consistent.

Depending on your results you may be given an inhaler (bronchodilator) and have the test repeated 15-20 minutes later to see if there is any improvement. This does not automatically mean you will be prescribed an inhaler long-term.

Unless specified by your GP the inhaler given will contain Salbutamol. Salbutamol is a commonly used inhaler designed to open up your airways. The effects last approximately four hours. The physiologist will show you how to take the inhaler via a spacer.



Inhaler and Spacer

### Will I feel any pain or discomfort?

The test is not painful but can feel a little uncomfortable. Some patients experience light-headedness. You will be encouraged to do as much as you can and given time to recover between tests.

### How long will the test take?

The test will take between 10 and 30 minutes. Some of this time may involve waiting while any medication we give you takes effect.

### How should I prepare for Spirometry?

Please bring all your inhalers to your appointment. On the day of your test please **DO NOT** use any of the following inhalers or nebulers:

- Ventolin / Salbutamol / Salamol (Blue)
- Combivent (Grey)
- Atrovent (White/Green)
- Ipratropium Bromide
- Bricanyl / Terbutaline (Blue)

If you feel breathless and take any of these inhalers within the four hours please inform the physiologist at the start of your test.

**Do take all of your other medications as normal.**

- Please do not smoke in the 24 hours before the test.
- Please do not drink alcohol on the day of the test.
- Please avoid eating a large meal two hours before the test.
- Please wear non-restrictive comfortable clothing.

If on the date of your test you have a chest infection for which you are taking antibiotics please ring booked admissions on 0151 600 1217 to change the date of your appointment. A chest infection will affect your test and give your GP or Practice Nurse invalid results.

**What are the benefits of having a spirometry test?**

Your GP or Practice Nurse will use the results of the test to help them diagnose problems with your breathing or monitor existing breathing conditions.

**What are the risks involved?**

The procedure is performed in large numbers at this hospital and is very low risk.

You should tell the physiologist if you have any of the following:

- Coughed up blood recently and the cause is not known.
- Pneumothorax
- Had a heart attack within the last six weeks
- Uncontrolled angina

- Had a stroke in the last six weeks
- Had any eye surgery in the last six weeks
- Had any thoracic or abdominal surgery in the last six weeks
- Any thoracic, abdominal or cerebral aneurysms.

Some of the general risks associated with the procedure are outlined below; individual patients however may have a greater risk of some or all of the complications.

- You may feel light-headed after each attempt at the test but this will only last a few seconds.
- Occasionally some patients feel shaky after they have been given the inhaler. This is also normal.

Rarer complications include:

- Fainting due to the forced nature of the test.
- Nausea

### **What can I expect after the test and when can I resume normal activities?**

After the test is over you can go home and resume your normal activities straight away. You should continue taking your inhalers as normal.

### **When do I get the results?**

The results will not be available on the day of your test. They will be taken back to the Liverpool Heart and Chest Hospital to be reported and will be sent to your GP practice within 5 working days.

## **GP Community Spirometry Clinics**

The physiologists from the Pulmonary Function Department at the Liverpool Heart and Chest Hospital hold GP community spirometry clinics in their department and also visit the GP practices around the city. You will be offered a choice of the practices we visit so you may select the one nearest to you.