

BRONCHOSCOPY

What is bronchoscopy?

Bronchoscopy is a procedure which enables the doctor to see inside your bronchial tubes. Unlike x-rays which take "photographs" of the lung, bronchoscopy lets the doctor see inside the wind pipes, an area not clearly shown on x-rays. Bronchoscopy can also help in making the diagnosis and in planning appropriate treatment. It also **allows** specimens to be taken for examination.

When is bronchoscopy necessary?

Your doctor will usually request a bronchoscopy when he suspects something wrong with your airways or lungs. Persisting cough, the coughing of blood or an abnormality on chest x-ray are the most common reasons. The results will help your doctor determine what is wrong and to help you in the most effective way.

Preparation for your bronchoscopy

You will be asked not to eat or drink for 6 hours before the bronchoscopy. If you normally take any tablets, arrange with your doctor when to take them on the day of the test. If you are an insulin dependant diabetic, special arrangements need to be made. It is also wise to arrange for someone to drive you home after the procedure because the sedative you may be given for the bronchoscopy could make it unsafe for you to drive or to travel alone on public transport. You might also be given an injection which dries up the saliva in the mouth. Blood tests may also be taken before the bronchoscopy starts.

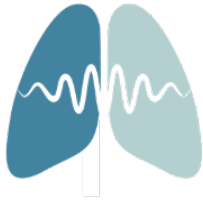
What happens during your bronchoscopy?

When you arrive for your test you will be given local anaesthetic spray to your nose and throat. This numbs the nose and throat reducing any discomfort during the bronchoscopy. You may also be given a sedative injection, but will not be completely "sent to sleep" as you might for a major operation.

The bronchoscope itself is a flexible plastic tube thinner than an ordinary lead pencil. It is made from special glass fibres which carry the picture from the tip to the viewing lens. It also has a special channel which allows the doctor to place local anaesthetic into the airways ahead to ensure that you suffer no discomfort. The tube is passed gently through a nostril and guided into the windpipe at the back of the throat. The test usually takes about 20 minutes in all. Sometimes an x-ray machine is also used to place the bronchoscope in a correct area of the lung.

After your bronchoscopy

The numbness of the throat from the local anaesthetic usually takes one hour to wear off during which time you should not have anything to eat or drink as it may go down the "wrong way". You will be kept under nursing supervision during this time. Because of the sedative you receive you must check with your doctor on how long you should wait before driving, using machinery, using public transport, going back to work, signing legal documents. It often takes a few days for all the specimens/samples to be checked in the laboratory so your doctor may not be able to give you an accurate diagnosis on the day of the bronchoscopy.



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Please Note: This information is intended by The Australian Lung Foundation to be used as a guide only and is not an authoritative statement. Please consult your family doctor or specialist respiratory physician if you have further questions relating to the information provided here.