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Spirometry – Patient Information Sheet

Definition

- Spirometry is a simple breathing test. The test is used to see how well your lungs are functioning. It is used to diagnose different lung diseases and also monitor patients with established lung conditions.

Why the test is performed ?

- Spirometry is common and useful in a number of different situations.
- Common reasons include:
 1. looking for the cause of problems such as cough, shortness of breath or wheeze.
 2. following up a finding on a chest X-ray or other lung test.
 3. diagnosing and monitoring common lung diseases such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.
 4. detecting early problems in people who have been exposed to things that may damage the lungs such as cigarette smoke, certain dusts and some medications.

How the test is performed ?

- The appointment will last for 30 minutes.
- Your height and weight will be checked.
- You will be asked to sit and breathe in deeply and then blow as hard and fast as you can until your lungs are empty. This may be repeated several times.
- You may then be given an inhaled medication that relaxes and opens the airways. The whole cycle of spirometry testing is repeated 10 minutes later to see if there is any improvement in your lung functioning.

How to prepare for the test ?

- Don't smoke or do strenuous exercise on the **day of the test** • don't drink alcohol or eat a big meal for **4 hours** before the test • wear comfortable, unrestrictive clothing for the test • if you use puffers or inhalers try not to use the reliever ones for at least **4 hours** before the test • ensure that your bladder is empty • remove any loose fitting dentures.
- Let the nurse know if you are feeling unwell today.

How the test will feel ?

- Spirometry is not painful but may cause a lightheaded feeling for a few moments. some people get quite puffed or occasionally dizzy.

What the risks are ?

- Spirometry is a very low risk procedure.
- However, it is not recommended in certain conditions so let your doctor or the technician know if you have recently had any of the following: • A recent chest infection • A collapsed lung • Been coughing up blood • A heart attack or stroke • Unstable angina • Any chest, abdominal or eye surgery • High blood pressure • An aneurysm • A perforated ear drum.

Special considerations

- IF YOU HAVE BEEN TREATED FOR A CHEST INFECTION IN THE **LAST 6 WEEKS** THE TEST CANNOT BE PERFORMED.