

LUNG BIOPSY INFORMATION SHEET

Introduction

Your doctor has advised that you need a test called a lung biopsy. This leaflet will help to explain what a lung biopsy is, but if you have any more questions please feel free to ask the staff at the time of your procedure.

What is a lung biopsy?

A lung biopsy is a way of getting a piece of tissue from the lung, by passing a small needle through the skin into the chest. A specialist known as a pathologist then examines the sample in the laboratory, under a microscope. This should help us to find out what is wrong with you.

Will I need a general anaesthetic?

No. The biopsy will be done under local anaesthetic – a small injection to numb the skin.

Can I eat and drink before the test?

Yes, you may have a light breakfast beforehand, tea and toast for example.

Should I take my tablets on the day of the test?

Yes, generally. You should not be taking warfarin, as this slows blood clotting – your doctor should have gone through this with you in clinic.

What will happen when I arrive at the hospital?

Most lung biopsies are done in the CT scanning department, although occasionally ultrasound is used. When you arrive the doctor who is going to perform the biopsy (known as a radiologist) will explain everything to you, and you will be asked to sign a consent form, if you haven't already done so.

A few pictures will then be taken to find exactly where to take the samples from. You will be asked to keep as still as possible, and take gentle breaths in and out when required.

The radiologist will then clean the skin with antiseptic, and cover the area with a clean towel. Local anaesthetic will be injected into the skin with a small needle. The anaesthetic sometimes stings as it goes in, but the area will soon go numb.

Having checked that everything is lined up as planned, the doctor will then pass a needle through the skin into the lung and take some samples.

Will it hurt me?

It shouldn't hurt at the time. Sometimes the needle passing through the lining of the lung can give you a sharp pain, and some people get pain after the anaesthetic wears off, for which you can take painkillers such as paracetamol.

Can I go home after the biopsy?

Once the biopsy is done you will need to lie flat in bed for a few hours. If your biopsy was in the morning you should be able to go home in the afternoon provided there is someone to stay with you overnight.

If the biopsy wasn't done until the afternoon you won't be able to go home until the evening, and then people often prefer to spend the night in hospital.

What are the risks of having a lung biopsy?

It is very common for a little air to leak into the space around the lung during a biopsy and this may cause the lung to partially collapse. This is called a pneumothorax. We know that this happens around 1 time in every 5 procedures, but mostly the pneumothorax is so small it doesn't cause any problem. Occasionally however lots of air leaks out and causes a big pneumothorax, which needs treating – this happens between 4 and 5 times every 100 biopsies. If that were to happen then we would treat it either by sucking the air out from around the

lung with a needle, or putting in a small tube, called a chest drain, to let it out that way. If this happened you would probably have to stay in hospital a day or two.

It is quite normal to cough up some streaks of blood for a day or two after the biopsy. Very rarely a larger bleed can occur, in which case you should contact your GP or the A&E department at the hospital. (A&E Advice Line at LGI: 0113 3922503 / St James's 0113 2022512)

Will there be any side effects after the biopsy?

Most people have no problems at all. Very rarely an air leak (pneumothorax) can develop a few hours after the biopsy. If you do become suddenly short of breath, or get severe chest pain, you should contact the A/E department straight away to arrange to be seen and have another chest x-ray. (A&E Advice Line at LGI: 0113 3922503 / St James's 0113 2022512)

Can I drive after the biopsy?

Someone else must drive you home after the test. You should be able to drive again the next day if you feel well.

What about flying in an aircraft after a biopsy?

You should not normally fly for 6 weeks after a lung biopsy. If you do need to fly in less than 6 weeks, please discuss this with your hospital doctor.

When can I go back to work?

You should be able to go back to work the day after the biopsy, unless advised otherwise by your doctor.

When will I get the results?

It can take a week to 10 days for the results of the test to get back to your doctor. You should have been given an appointment to see the doctor again. If you have not heard from the hospital within 2 weeks of the biopsy please ring the consultant's secretary to make another appointment.

Please remember you are free to ask any questions that you may have, at any time.

Thank you