

Bronchoscopy

What is a bronchoscopy?

A bronchoscopy is an exam of the inside of the lungs using a thin flexible tube called a bronchoscope. You may need this exam to:

- Find what is causing a cough or hoarseness
- Remove excess mucus
- Find cause of coughing up blood
- Check for the cause of an abnormal chest x-ray
- Get mucous samples (washings)
- Get tissue biopsies
- Diagnose airway injury, tumors, tuberculosis, infections, obstructions, or any other lung issues



Before the Exam

Before the exam, a nurse will give you medicine through an IV. The medicines will help you relax, reduce coughing, dry your mouth and throat, and reduce pain. You may or may not have a breathing tube in place before the exam. Sometimes, we will place the breathing tube and leave it in for several hours after the exam.

During the Exam

A nurse will watch your comfort, blood pressure, heart rate and rhythm, and oxygen level. We will numb your nostrils and throat with a numbing jelly or spray. We will place an oxygen tube in one nostril. We will pass the scope through the other nostril, down the throat and into the lungs. This should cause only slight pain or a cough. As we move the scope, the doctor will numb the area ahead of it by spraying with a numbing liquid.

No Breathing Tube

It is not harmful to swallow the anesthetic jelly or spray. It is ok to cough when we spray the liquid. The area will numb in seconds and suppress the urge to cough. You will not be able to talk while the scope is in the lungs. You will give hand signals if you have pain.

The doctor may take biopsies (a small piece of tissue), washings and/or brushings. This will not cause you pain. We may take X-rays during and after the exam. The exam should take about 1 hour.

After the Exam

You may have a sore throat after the exam. If you had biopsies taken, you may cough up tiny spots of blood. This should not last longer than one day. If it does, let the nurse know.

We may limit your eating and drinking while the medicine wears off.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright ©3/2020. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#4481.