

Pulmonary Function Tests (PFT)

Test date: _____. Test time: _____.

Pulmonary Function Tests (PFT) are a series of breathing tests. These tests measure the size of your lungs, the speed in which air moves through the airways, and the gas exchange in the lungs. These tests give your doctor details about how well your lungs work. Your doctor may choose from many types of breathing tests. The test time may change from 15 minutes to over an hour. The length of test depends on which tests are ordered.

Reasons to Have PFTs

There are many reasons why your doctor has ordered these tests. The most common reasons are to check:

- If you have lung disease.
- The cause and extent of lung problems.
- The type of treatment for lung problems.
- The risk for surgery.

Preparing for PFTs

- **Do not** exercise or eat a heavy meal for at least four hours before the test.
- **Do not** smoke the day of the test.
- **Do not** use your inhaler for 24 hours before the test unless you have trouble breathing.
- Use your breathing medicine if you are short of breath.
- Wear shoes and clothing for exercise (i.e. walking shoes, sweatpants, shorts). If having an exercise test, you may be walking on a treadmill or riding a bike.
- We may suggest that you use the bathroom just before the test.

During the Test

Follow instructions and perform the movements explained to you to get good test results. You will be told how to do each test before you start. The tech will talk you through each test.

Most breathing tests will be done while you are sitting. You will breathe in and out of a mouthpiece to measure your lung function. You may be asked to inhale a mist or spray of medicine into your lungs to see if it improves your breathing.

You may have your blood drawn from an artery to check oxygen and carbon dioxide levels in your blood. This blood test tells how well your lungs use the air you breathe. If blood is drawn from an artery, it is important to keep the site bandaged for 1 hour to reduce any of bruising at the site.

After the Test

You should be able to do your normal routine after the test. Your health care provider will talk with you about your test results when the final report is done.

When to Call

Call if you have any questions before your visit.

Who to Call

UW Pulmonary Function Lab
(608) 263-7000 or (800) 323-8942

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 © 5/2025 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#5364