

What is Spirometry?

Spirometry is a breathing test which measures the maximum amount of air you can expel from your lungs, this assesses your lung function and can give a diagnosis of multiple lung conditions.

How is Spirometry done?

The practice Nurse performing the test will measure your height and weight then ask you to sit upright in a chair and hold the device (spirometer).

You will then be asked to take a deep breath in and blow out slowly and gently and then hard and fast until your lungs are completely empty. This will be carried out multiple times in the same appointment to ensure results are consistent.

Reversibility test – assessing for asthma

Your doctor or practice nurse has requested this test to help diagnose if you have asthma. This requires you to perform an initial test. You will then be given an inhaler then after 15 minutes you will have the test repeated. The inhaler given is called salbutamol, a commonly used inhaler that is designed to open your airways. The effects last approximately 4 hours, the practice nurse will show you how to administer the inhaler through a spacer provided or if you have your own salbutamol (blue inhaler) and spacer you should bring it along to your appointment.

Will I feel pain or discomfort?

The test is not painful, but you may feel a little uncomfortable, some patients often feel lightheaded. The nurse will encourage you to carry out the test with maximum effort, but you will be given time to recover in between. Occasionally the inhaler given can make you feel a little bit Shakey, this is also normal.

How long will the test take? The test will take between 45-60 minutes, some of this time may involve waiting for the medication to take effect.

How should I prepare for Spirometry?

- Please bring your Salbutamol (blue inhaler) with you along with a spacer if you have one.
- Do take any current prescribed medications as normal except any inhalers you have been asked to stop prior to the test.
- Do not smoke in the 24hrs leading up to the test
- Do not drink alcohol on the day of the test
- Do not have caffeine e.g. tea/coffee for 4 hours before the test
- Avoid eating a large meal for 2 hours before the test
- Avoid vigorous exercise for 30 minutes before the test
- Please wear non-restrictive comfortable clothing

For your own comfort please empty your bladder before your appointment.

On the day of the test if you have a chest infection, please call the surgery to cancel and re-book for when you have been well for at least 6 weeks. A chest infection and or oral steroids will affect the quality of the test giving invalid results.

What are the risks involved?

The procedure performed is very low risk however you should notify the surgery if you have any of the following:

- Coughed up blood within the last 6 weeks
- Collapsed lung
- Had a heart attack within the last 6 weeks
- Uncontrolled Angina
- Had a stroke in the last 6 weeks
- Had any eye surgery in the last 6 weeks
- Had any thoracic or abdominal surgery in the last 6 weeks
- Any thoracic abdominal or cerebral aneurysms

What to expect after the test and when can I get my results?

Once the test is over you can go home and resume normal activities straight away and continue to take your inhalers as prescribed, you will have a follow up appointment with the nurse to obtain your results and any diagnosis that may have been confirmed.