

Having a bronchoscopy - Patient information

You have been advised to have a bronchoscopy to help find the cause of your symptoms. You may also be having the test to assess the progress of your condition.

What is a bronchoscopy?

A bronchoscopy is a test which allows the doctor to look directly at the trachea (windpipe) and the bronchi (branches of the airway). A bronchoscope is a long flexible tube, about the width of a pencil with a bright light at the end, which is passed through the mouth or nose past your larynx (voice box) and down into the lungs.

During the test different procedures may be performed to obtain small amounts of tissue for further examination in the laboratory. Biopsy samples may be obtained by threading forceps through the bronchoscope. This is not painful.

What should you expect?

You will be made comfortable on a bed. You will be given a premedication injection via a needle in your hand/arm prior to the examination. This will make you sleepy but is not a general anaesthetic. A local anaesthetic will be sprayed into your nose/mouth to numb it. This can taste bitter. As the bronchoscope is passed more anaesthetic will be sprayed onto the voice box. This will make you cough but will not interfere with the breathing which we monitor throughout the procedure. The examination lasts about 15-20 minutes. The bronchoscope is then removed quickly and easily causing little discomfort.

After the test

You will be left to relax for an hour or so to let the sedation wear off. Because your throat will be numb you will not be allowed to eat for an hour after the procedure.

Going home

Once home rest quietly for the remainder of the day. The sedation lasts longer than you think so you should not drive, operate machinery or drink alcohol. By the following day the effects of the sedation should have worn off and you should be able to resume normal activities.