

Bronchoscopy: Information for Patients

Bronchoscopy is the direct, visual examination of the inside of the windpipe and the bronchial air passages, using a thin, flexible instrument. Bronchoscopy is used to determine the cause of specific symptoms (such as chronic coughs or the coughing up of blood), and to investigate particular forms of pneumonia or abnormal findings of the lungs noted during x-ray examination. Depending on the kind of problem under investigation, minute tissue samples may be painlessly removed during bronchoscopy, using miniature forceps. Also, selected individual bronchial tubes may be irrigated with a saline solution in order to provide cell specimens for examination and samples for micro-biological analysis (bacteria, viruses, fungi).

Before leaving home

You must come for the examination with an empty stomach; this means that you are not allowed to eat or drink anything for at least 6 hours prior to the examination.

If your doctor has prescribed any medication which you have to take in the morning, take it with very little water.

If you are taking insulin, reduce the amount to half your normal dose at the most.

Do not smoke before the examination.

Your appointment

You have been referred to us by letter from your doctor, and an appointment for the examination has been arranged either through your doctor or with you personally. Please do not drive yourself to the hospital. Because of the anaesthetic and other medication you will be given in preparation for the examination (see below), you will not be allowed to drive any vehicle for at least 24 hours after the examination.

Who will examine you?

At the Zuger Kantonsspital, you will be examined by lung specialist Dr. T. Sigrist and will be attended by one of our endoscopy assistants.

Your hospital appointment / Getting ready for the examination /

The examination itself

When you arrive for your appointment, please go to register at the central Reception Desk of the Zuger Kantonsspital. The receptionist will then direct you to the Outpatients Unit (ÜWS), where a nurse will receive you and prepare you for the examination. As a precaution, an infusion into your forearm will be set up, so that intravenous fluid or sedating medication may be administered if required. When the time comes for the actual examination, the nurse will take you from the Outpatients Unit to the Endoscopy Room; there, you will be received by the doctor and the endoscopy assistant, who will once again go over the details of the planned examination with you and answer any remaining questions you may have. At this point at the latest, you should inform them if you are suffering from any illness, if you have had any previous endoscopic examinations, or if you have ever suffered any allergic reactions or side-effects from medications. Dentures must be removed now.

Your nose and throat will be locally anaesthetised with a bitter-tasting spray, and then your nose will be additionally treated with an anaesthetic gel, applied locally.

During the examination, you will receive oxygen through one nostril, and both your blood-oxygen level and your heartbeat will be continually monitored throughout; the examination itself, however, will not interfere with your breathing in any way.

You might receive a mild sedative or narcotic agent (Dormicum or Propofol) that might make you feel drowsy at the beginning.

In several stages, the flexible instrument will be passed through your nose and throat into your windpipe. Depending on the sensitivity of your air passages, however, you may feel a slight tickling sensation in your throat that makes you want to cough; any such irritation can be suppressed during the examination by further applications of local anaesthetic. The examination normally lasts about 15 minutes, but may take longer if there are any unforeseen findings.

Immediately after the examination, the doctor will tell you the first results.

After the examination

After the examination has been completed, you will be collected by one of the Outpatients Unit staff and taken back there to remain under observation for 1 to 2 hours; during this period, your blood pressure and heart action will be checked at regular intervals. Afterwards, the intravenous infusion will be removed and, accompanied by a friend or relative, you will be able to go home. Please remember that you are not allowed to drive any vehicle for at least 24 hours after the examination; this is because the pre-medication you were given to prevent you from coughing during the examination will have made you rather sleepy, and your reactions will be slower than normal.

What are the risks?

No form of (invasive) examination is absolutely risk-free. The risk involved in performing a bronchoscopy, however, is very small; complications are very rare, and if they do arise, they are usually the result of some other, existing medical condition.

Possible complications include: hoarseness or fever, rarely bleeding caused by the removal of a tissue sample; pneumonia caused by irrigation with saline solution; depression of respiratory function as a side-effect of drugs administered to control coughing; or a reaction in case of hypersensitivity to the medication administered. Rarely a collapse of the lung can occur after biopsies have been taken.

In the worst case, complications may necessitate an emergency operation or a blood transfusion. By adhering strictly to the rules and directions given above, however, you can help to minimise the risk of complications and ensure that the examination itself proceeds as smoothly as possible.

Questions

Please call us if you have any questions about the examination itself or any particular risks. If you wish, you can arrange a separate appointment in order to discuss your questions with the doctor who will be examining you. Remember, too, that you will also be able to ask questions immediately before the actual examination.

If you should cough up any blood, develop a high temperature, or experience any other unusual symptoms following the examination, please do not hesitate to call us immediately, at any time.

Patient's statement of consent

I have read and understood this information form. I have no further questions and feel that the counselling was satisfactory; therefore, after adequate time for consideration, I consent to the proposed examination.

Place / Date _____

Signature _____

Dr. med. T. Sigrist
FMH Pneumology