

Thoracoscopy

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This fact sheet is for general information about this procedure only. It is not intended to be used as medical advice or to replace advice that your relevant healthcare professional would give you. If you have a particular medical problem, please consult a healthcare professional.

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What is a thoracoscopy?

A thoracoscopy is a procedure to look for any problems in your pleural space, using a telescope. The pleural space is the space between the outside lining of your lungs and the inside lining of your ribcage.

What are the benefits of a thoracoscopy?

A thoracoscopy is a good way of finding out if there is a problem.

During the procedure, your doctor can perform biopsies (removing small pieces of tissue) to help make the diagnosis.

A pleurodesis can be performed at the same time to treat a pleural effusion (where there is too much fluid in your pleural space) or a pneumothorax (where air escapes into your pleural space) that may cause your lung to collapse.

Are there any alternatives to a thoracoscopy?

An x-ray or scan can give some information. Sometimes a biopsy can be performed by inserting a needle through your chest or airway.

What does the procedure involve?

A thoracoscopy is sometimes performed under a general anaesthetic.

A thoracoscopy usually takes about 45 minutes. It involves making a hole in your chest wall and then inserting a telescope into the hole.

Your doctor will inject local anaesthetic into the area where they will make the hole. They will use an instrument called an introducer to insert the telescope in the hole.

Your doctor will look carefully for problems and perform any biopsies.

Your doctor will insert a tube in the hole (chest drain) to release any air or fluid that can sometimes collect.

What complications can happen?

Some complications can be serious and can even cause death.

- Pneumothorax
- Shortness of breath
- Bleeding
- Infection
- Allergic reaction
- Pulmonary oedema, where your lung gets soggy with fluid, causing shortness of breath
- Surgical emphysema, where air leaks into the tissues under your skin
- Chest infection

Consequences of this procedure

- Pain

How soon will I recover?

If you have not had a pleurodesis, you should be able to go home after your doctor has removed the drain and you have recovered from the sedative.

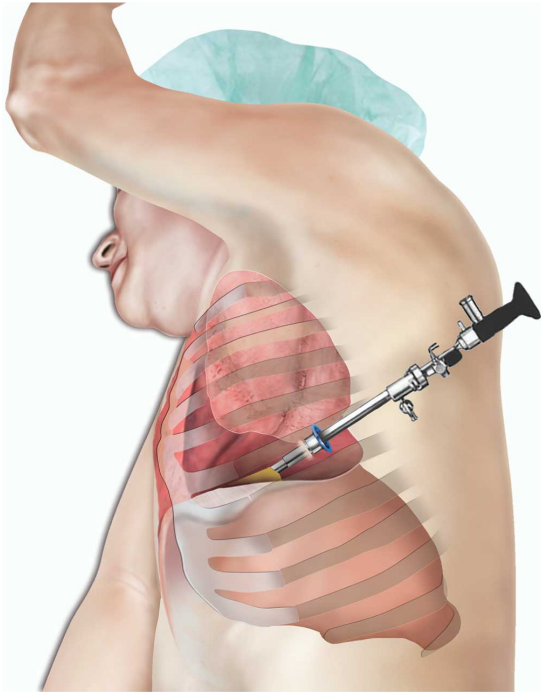
You should be able to return to work after about 1 to 5 days unless you are told otherwise.

Regular exercise should improve your long-term health. Before you start exercising, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

The healthcare team will tell you what was found during the thoracoscopy and discuss with you any treatment or follow-up you need.

Summary

A thoracoscopy is usually a safe and effective way of finding out if there is a problem in the space between your lungs and ribcage.



A thoracoscopy

Keep this information document. Use it to help you if you need to talk to the healthcare team.

Some information, such as risk and complication statistics, is taken from global studies and/or databases. Please ask your surgeon or doctor for more information about the risks that are specific to you, and they may be able to tell you about any other suitable treatments options.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant healthcare team would give you.

Acknowledgements

Reviewer

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Illustrator

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