Your Guide to Pulmonary Function Tests

Pulmonary function tests (PFT) can help determine how well your lungs are working by measuring how much oxygen enters your blood stream and the amount of air you can move in and out of the body with each breath.

REASONS FOR TESTING

Your provider may order PFT for a number of reasons, like investigating the cause of respiratory symptoms or ensuring you are healthy enough to undergo a surgical procedure.

PFT results can determine and evaluate:

- Causes of decreased lung function
- Presence or progression of respiratory diseases, such as asthma or COPD
- How well a certain medication is working or if your current treatment plan needs changed
- How healthy your lungs are before anesthesia or medical procedures

HOW TO PREPARE

There are many factors that can impact your breathing. To give your provider a clear look at your lung health, please note the following before each test:

- Avoid exercise for at least 30 minutes.
- Do not smoke for at least 4 hours.
- Avoid alcohol for at least 4 hours.
- Do not wear tight, restrictive clothing.
- Avoid large, heavy meals.
- Ask your provider if there should be any changes to your medications or oxygen use before each test.
- Report any cold, flu or other symptoms of illness.

SPIROMETRY

Spirometry is a simple test used to measure how much air you move into your lungs, and how quickly you can exhale it. You’ll take a deep breath, then blow into a tube connected to a machine. This will be repeated three times.

You may be asked to practice your spirometry test technique. Your healthcare team will give you easy-to-follow instructions and walk you through the process. Before the test:

- Ask your provider if you do not understand the instructions.
- Ask if you should take your medications before the test. Sometimes, a medicine to expand your airways may be given during the test.
- Let your provider know if you become dizzy or lightheaded during the test.

DIFFUSION STUDIES

This PFT measures how well the oxygen you breathe moves into your blood stream and through your body. You’ll take a quick deep breath, hold it for 10 seconds, then gently exhale. Your provider will guide you through the test.

- Avoid smoking and second-hand smoke before this test.
- If you have been prescribed oxygen, you may be asked to remove it for a few minutes before this exam is completed.

TYPES OF TEST

Your provider may use a single test or recommend a combination to evaluate your lung health. There are three common types of PFT, which include:

- Spirometry
- Diffusion studies
- Body plethysmography

Procedure date and time: ____________________________
Please arrive to Fairfield Medical Center at: ____________________________
PLETHYSMOGRAPHY

This test measures the volume of air you pull into your lungs and how much is left behind when you exhale. For this test, you’ll sit inside a device that looks similar to a telephone booth. There will be windows, and your provider will monitor you throughout the exam. With a clip on your nose, you will be instructed to breathe through a mouthpiece in a specific way. Before the test:

- Let your provider know if you have a fear of small or enclosed spaces.
- If you have been prescribed oxygen, you may be asked to remove it for a few minutes before this exam is completed.

UNDERSTANDING RESULTS

PFT results are determined by a set of “predicted values” based on your age, height and sex. This is because lung health is not “one size fits all.” Normal results for a 35 year-old-woman may look very different than normal results for a 55-year-old man. Our height and build can also affect the size of our lungs, which changes the capacity, or amount of air, they can hold.

Your provider will discuss the results of your respective PFT, as well as any recommendations they have for your health or treatment plan. It is important you address any concerns or questions you have about your lung health.