

TESTfacts

An Educational Health Series From National Jewish Health®



Lung Surgery

Why is lung surgery done?

Your doctor has suggested you have a lung surgery as part of your evaluation. Lung surgery allows the doctor to look inside the lungs and lung cavity. Lung surgery may be done to help diagnose and treat lung diseases.

Types of Surgical Procedures

There are different types of surgery used in the diagnosis and treatment of lung disease. Here are a few surgical procedures your doctor might consider for you.

Biopsy

A biopsy of the lung tissue or nodule may be done. During a biopsy a small amount of tissue is taken from a specific area of the lung. The cells and tissue can be studied closely to help determine your diagnosis and the best treatment. There are different surgical approaches for biopsy depending on the location.

- A mediastinoscopy is performed for biopsy of the lymph nodes within the mediastinum (central area of the thoracic cavity). During this procedure, a tube is inserted through an incision above the breast bone to look at the area between the lungs.
- A VATS (Video Assisted Thoracoscopic Surgery) procedure is performed for biopsies within the lung. Three small incisions are made between the ribs. A tube with a camera and instruments are inserted into the incisions. The lungs and lung cavity can be viewed by the camera and surgery is performed without the need for larger incisions or spreading of the ribs. A chest tube is placed to drain fluid and air.

Resectional Surgery

Resectional surgery refers to a type of surgery where a lung or a portion of lung is removed.

- A wedge resection is the removal of a small portion of a lobe.

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- A segment resection is the removal of a larger portion of a lobe.
- A lobectomy is the removal of a lobe of the lung.
- A pneumonectomy is removal of an entire lung.

Most resectional surgeries can be performed with a VATS procedure. Sometimes a larger incision (lithoracotomy) is required to complete the surgery safely.

The surgeon or doctor will explain the type of lung surgery that may be recommended for you.

How do you get ready for the test?

Your surgery will take place at Saint Joseph Hospital. You will receive information from National Jewish Health and Saint Joseph Hospital on preparing for surgery. Follow these instructions closely or your surgery may need to be cancelled.

What can you expect?

Most people who have a biopsy with a VATS procedure stay in the hospital for 1-2 days, although some people require a longer stay. Full recovery for physical activity may take 4 weeks. The doctor and nurse will review what to expect before, during and after the surgery. The doctor will also explain the risks and benefits of this surgery in more detail.

Questions to ask my health care team

If you have questions please call 303-398-1355.

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