

Preparing for bronchoscopy

Dear Patient,

Here are some facts you'll want to know about the bronchoscopy the doctor as scheduled for you.

This test permits the doctor to examine your airway (your windpipe and lungs) with a thin, flexible instrument called a bronchoscope.

By looking through the instrument's eye piece, the doctor can see abnormalities and obstructions. With another part of the instrument, he can obtain tiny tissue samples to help diagnose your illness. And he can remove foreign bodies or excess mucus.

BEFORE THE TEST

Don't eat for 8 hours before the test and don't drink any alcoholic beverages for 24 hours beforehand either. Food and alcohol can cause test complications and create problems with any sedatives you are given.

Do continue to take any prescribed drugs, unless the doctor says not do.

Just before the test, you will receive a local anesthetic to numb the back of your throat and to stop you from gagging. This helps the bronchoscope slide easily inside of your trachea.

DURING THE TEST

The test takes 30 to 60 minutes. You will lie on your back or sit upright, depending on your comfort and the doctor's preference. Once the doctor suppresses your gag reflex with an

anesthetic, he will insert the end of the

bronchoscope through your nose or your mouth.

As he advances the instrument, he will flush small amounts of liquid anesthetic through it to decrease any coughing and wheezing you may have. The instrument will slide through your major airways. Now you may experience some discomfort with breathing. Remember to stay calm. If necessary, the doctor will give you extra oxygen.

AFTER THE TEST

About every 15 minutes, the nurse will monitor your blood pressure, heart rate, breathing and temperature to make sure you are recovering well. You will lie comfortably with your head raised. Until the anesthetic wears off and your gag reflex returns, you won't be allowed to eat, drink or take oral medications. You may be hoarse or have a sore throat, but this is only temporary. You may gargle or suck on throat lozenges once your gag reflex returns.

Soon after the test, you will have a chest x-ray – also to make sure you are doing well.

Your sedative may not have worn off by the time you are ready to go home. So for safety's sake, arrange for someone to take you home from the hospital or clinic.

Call the doctor or nurse immediately if you have any of these symptoms: bloody mucus, difficulty breathing, wheezing or chest pain.