



Pulmonary Function Testing (PFT)

What is Pulmonary Function Testing? Pulmonary Function Testing (or PFT) evaluates how well your lungs work by determining:

- how much air your lungs can hold,
- how quickly you can move air in and out of your lungs, and
- how well your lungs put oxygen into and remove carbon dioxide from your blood.

PFTs (lung function tests) are used to help determine the cause of breathing problems, diagnose certain lung diseases, measure the severity of lung problems, and check to see how well treatment for a lung disease is working.

What tests may be included with a Pulmonary Function Test? There are a variety of breathing tests designed to determine whether or not a patient has a lung problem. You may be required to participate in any or all of the following tests:

Spirometry – measures how much and how quickly you can move air out of your lungs.

Gas Diffusion – measures the amount of oxygen and other gases that cross your lungs' air sacs per minute, evaluating how well gases are being absorbed into your blood from your lungs.

Body Plethysmography – may be used to measure your total lung capacity (TLC) and Residual Volume (RV).

Inhalation Challenge Test – measures the response of your airways to substances (allergens) that may be causing asthma or wheezing (also referred to as provocation studies).

How is a PFT Done? The HNJVH Cardio-Pulmonary Department provides a special private exam room that has all the lung function measuring devices for adults as well as children. A specially trained Respiratory Therapist will perform the tests.

For most of the lung function tests, you will wear a nose clip to make sure no air passes through your nose while the test is in progress.



While sitting in a sealed, clear box – called a body plethysmograph (looks a lot like a telephone booth) – you will be asked to breath a variety of ways into a mouthpiece connected to a recording device.



How Will the Test Feel? Because some of the tests involve periods of forced breathing and/or rapid breathing, you may feel some shortness of breath or have a feeling of lightheadedness.

These feelings are temporary and should pass relatively quickly. For your comfort, the Respiratory Therapist will be with you at all times throughout the Pulmonary Function Test process.

How Do I Prepare for Testing? Your physician will provide you with specific requirements before your scheduled PFT. Tell your doctor:

- if you have had recent chest pains or a heart attack,
- if you take medication for a lung problem (asthma, etc) as you may be required to stop taking some medicines before testing takes place,
- if you are allergic to any medicines.

Please be aware of the following recommendations prior to testing:

- do not eat a heavy meal prior to testing because a full stomach may prevent your lungs from fully expanding,
- do not smoke or exercise strenuously for at least six hours before the test,
- avoid drinks or food that contain caffeine because caffeine can affect the way your lungs handle airflow,
- on the day of the test, wear loose clothing so your breathing will not be restricted in any way.

The Admission Process: Pulmonary Function Testing requires referral by a family physician or specialist. Your physician may recommend some tests to be conducted prior to your Pulmonary Function Test. These tests may include: Arterial blood gas (ABG), Chest x-ray, and EKG.

Insurance Coverage: This program is offered at a minimum cost to the patient. Insurance plans such as Blue Cross/Blue Shield may cover partial costs, depending on the extent of the coverage. A portion of the program's cost may also be covered by Medicare and Medicaid.

If you have questions, or would like additional information about the services we have to offer, please contact the Cardio Pulmonary Services Office at Helen Newberry Joy Hospital by calling 906.293.9281 or 906.293.9200 ext 585.