

Flexible Bronchoscopy Instructions for Families

What is it?

A flexible bronchoscopy is a procedure performed at BC Children's Hospital by members of the Division of Respiratory Medicine. This procedure is performed under general anaesthesia (your child will be asleep for the procedure) in the operating room. Bronchoscopy involves using a small fiber optic camera to examine the large airways (trachea and bronchi) of the lungs. Sometimes, samples of lung fluid (bronchoalveolar lavage) or tissue (biopsy) are taken during the procedure. These samples can be sent to the laboratory to look for signs of infection or other diseases. Your physician will explain which samples will be taken in each particular case.

A bronchoscopy is usually a day procedure and your child will not generally need to stay overnight in hospital. You should expect to be in hospital for around 6-7 hours: 2 hours before the procedure starts and 3-4 hours after the procedure ends.

Preparing for the Procedure

Your child will be given a general anaesthetic for this procedure. As such, it is important that he/she has had nothing to eat or drink before the procedure (fasting). You will be contacted by the Operating Room the day before the procedure to confirm the time of the procedure and fasting instructions.

Any daily inhaled medications can be given in the morning as usual. Any essential oral medications can be given with a small sip of water. If your child takes any blood thinning medications, these should be held ahead of the procedure. Please confirm all medications that your child is taking with your Respiratory Medicine physician prior to the procedure.

You will be contacted with details of when and where you should arrive at the hospital a few days before the procedure. Please contact the Division of Respiratory Medicine at 604-875-7580 with any scheduling concerns.

During the Procedure

The procedure will be performed by an accredited specialist in Respiratory Medicine – though this may not be the same doctor you have seen in the clinic. This doctor will meet you in the pre-operative area on the day of the procedure

After your child is brought into the operating room, he/she will be put to sleep under general anaesthesia. A breathing tube or laryngeal mask airway will be inserted to help your child breathe during the procedure. The bronchoscope will be inserted into your child's airway through this tube.

In order to minimize discomfort after the procedure, the vocal cords and large airway are numbed with a topical anaesthetic administered through the bronchoscope.

Overall, the procedure typically takes about 1 hour. Your child will be taken to the post-anaesthetic care unit (PACU) after the procedure. You can wait in the surgical waiting room. The physician who performed the procedure will come and speak with you after it is completed and a volunteer or nurse will take you into the PACU when your child is starting to wake up.

After the Procedure

Your child will not be allowed to eat or drink for 1-2 hours after the procedure. Check with the nurse to see when your child can start eating and drinking. The nurses in the PACU will monitor your child after the procedure and contact the Respiratory Medicine doctor who performed the procedure if there are any concerns. Your child can usually go home by the late afternoon on the day of the procedure.

Follow-up/After-care

You will follow-up the results of the bronchoscopy with your Respiratory Medicine physician in his/her clinic.

There are no specific activity limitations following a bronchoscopy. Your child can return to school the next day. If a biopsy was taken, your child should not perform spirometry (or home spirometry) for one week following the procedure. Also, in the case of a biopsy, your child should not fly for 6 weeks following the procedure.

Some common side-effects after the procedure, which typically go away on their own after a few days, can include:

- Mild throat pain or hoarse voice
- Mild cough
- Low grade fever (<39.0°C) for 24-48 hours that goes away on its own or with acetaminophen or ibuprofen

If your child has any of the following signs after going home, please page the Respiratory Medicine physician on call through the BC Children's Hospital switchboard at 604-875-2345:

- fever of 39°C (102°F) or higher
- coughing up blood
- chest pain or throat pain that is severe or gets worse
- coughing that is severe or gets worse
- trouble swallowing
- shortness of breath
- vomiting (throwing up) that does not stop

If it is an emergency, do not wait. Take your child to the closest Emergency Department or call 9-1-1.