

# Having a pleural biopsy

**This leaflet explains about pleural biopsy – a procedure to take samples from inside your chest to help us diagnose certain problems.**

**If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the Pleural Team (contact details on page 4).**

## What is a pleural biopsy?

The space between the lung and the wall of the chest is known as the pleural cavity or pleural space. This space is lined by a membrane (thin layer) called the pleura. A pleural biopsy is a procedure that involves taking a sample of the pleura, using a special needle. This sample can then be analysed.

## Why do I need a pleural biopsy?

Previous investigations that you have had, such as a chest X-ray, indicate that there may be a buildup of fluid in the pleural cavity, and probably thickening of the pleura as well. Taking a sample of the pleura will allow us to investigate further, and possibly make a diagnosis.

## Preparing for the procedure

If you are taking the medicine warfarin, you should already have received some specific instructions. If you have not, or you are unsure about anything, please contact us so that we can advise.

If you have been using warfarin, or have a history of bleeding disorder, then you will need a blood test before this procedure, and you will be asked to come earlier so that this can be done.

## What will happen?

The procedure is usually done as a day case, meaning you don't have to stay in hospital overnight. Sometimes we may ask you to stay overnight.

First we will carry out an ultrasound scan (a procedure that uses high-frequency sound waves to create an image of part of the inside of the body) to locate an appropriate area for the biopsy. Once we have found an appropriate area, we will inject a local anaesthetic to make the area numb. This may sting slightly for a short period of time.

We will then make a small cut in the chosen area. We will pass a special needle through this cut, and the needle will be used to take biopsies (samples) from the lining of the chest wall.

This is not normally painful, but it may be uncomfortable. You may feel gentle pushing and pulling. Often the doctor will take three or four biopsies from the same area.

If there are no complications you will be able to go home straight afterwards. We may ask you to have a chest X-ray after the procedure.

After the procedure, the biopsies that have been taken are sent to a laboratory to be examined. It usually takes about five to seven days to get the formal results from this. Once we have the results, we will discuss them with you.

## **Are there any risks or complications?**

As with any medical procedure there is a certain amount of risk involved in pleural biopsy. In four in every 100 people, there can be some air in the pleural space. This usually resolves without any treatment. Because we will have to make cut in the chest to insert the needle, there is a chance that you could bleed more than usual. This happens to around one in every 500 people, and it usually stops on its own.

## **Are there any alternatives?**

The alternative is to have a procedure called a video-assisted thoracoscopy. This is more invasive: the doctor will have to insert a camera into the space between the lung and the chest wall. This may require you to stay in hospital overnight.

## **Asking for your consent**

We want to involve you in all the decisions about your care and treatment. If you decide to go ahead, you will be asked to sign a consent form. This confirms that you agree to have the procedure and understand what it involves.

If you would like more information about our consent process, please speak to a member of staff caring for you.

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about having a pleural biopsy, please contact the Department of Respiratory Medicine at St Thomas' Hospital Monday to Friday 09.00 – 17.00. Out of hours or in emergency please contact your General Practitioner or local accident and emergency department.

**t:** 020 7188 5821

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets)

## Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

**t:** 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

## Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

**t:** 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

**t:** 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** [complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk)

## Language Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

**t:** 020 7188 8815 **e:** [languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk)

## NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

**t:** 111

## NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

**w:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

## Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust

Members of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, and to become a member:

**t:** 0800 731 0319 **e:** [members@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:members@gstt.nhs.uk) **w:** [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership)

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