

Mediastinoscopy

How to prepare and what to expect

This handout explains a mediastinoscopy, what to expect from the procedure, how to prepare, and how to plan for your recovery.

What is a mediastinoscopy?

A *mediastinoscopy* is a biopsy of the lymph nodes in the central part of your chest. This biopsy is done to help diagnose your illness and find out what treatment is needed.

The procedure may be done by itself or right before lung surgery. If you are having lung surgery, please read the “Lung Surgery” handout to learn more.

What happens during the procedure?

Your surgeon will make an incision about 1 to 2 inches long where your neck meets your chest. They will take small tissue samples of your lymph nodes. Your surgeon and a *pathologist* (a doctor who studies body fluids and tissues to diagnose diseases) will study the sample under a microscope.

How do I prepare?

The Day Before

- **Plan for your ride home after your biopsy:** You **must** have a responsible adult drive you home the evening after your procedure. Or, this person may ride with you in a bus or taxi. You **cannot** take a bus or taxi by yourself.
- **Shower:** The night before your biopsy, use the special antibacterial soap your nurse gave you to wash your body. Do **not** use the antibacterial soap on your face and hair. (See



You must plan for a responsible adult to take you home after your biopsy.

directions that came with the soap.) Use your own soap and shampoo on your face and hair. Use clean towels to dry off, and put on clean clothes.

- **Arrival time:** The pre-surgery nurse will call you by **5 p.m.** the night before your biopsy. If your procedure is on a Monday, the nurse will call you the Friday before. If you do not hear from the pre-surgery nurse by 5 p.m., please call 206.598.6334.

The pre-surgery nurse will tell you when to come to the hospital and will remind you:

- Not to eat or drink after a certain time.
- Which of your regular medicines to take or not take, and to sip only enough water to swallow your pills.

Procedure Day

- **Shower:** Take another shower using the special soap. Follow the same steps as you did for your shower the day before surgery.

After Your Biopsy

Going Home

You will go home after your surgery. You will need to ride home with a responsible adult.

For Your Safety

Medicine given during and after your procedure will affect you. For 24 hours after your surgery, do **not**:

- Drive or travel alone
- Use machines
- Drink alcohol
- Sign any legal papers or make financial decisions
- Be responsible for children, pets, or an adult who needs care

The day after your procedure, you may:

- Take your usual medicines.
- Shower. Cover your dressing with plastic to keep it dry.
- Resume gentle activities. You may work from home the next day.

Incision Care

- Your incision will be covered with gauze and a clear dressing (bandage). There will be strips of white surgical tape called Steri-Strips over your incision. Leave the Steri-Strips in place until they fall off on their own, in about a week.
- Remove your dressing 48 hours after your biopsy. You can then shower. You may leave the area open to air and let shower water run over it.
- Your incision may heal with a raised lump or ridge.

Pain Control

Your doctor will prescribe pain medicine for you. You may have some discomfort in your chest area. You also may have a hoarse voice or sore throat. Do **not** drive if you are taking opioid pain medicine.

Biopsy Results

Your doctor will talk with you about your biopsy results at your next clinic visit.

When to Call

Call your doctor or nurse if you have:

- Bleeding that soaks your dressing
- A fever higher than 100°F (38°C)
- Chills or shaking
- Any sign of infection:
 - Redness
 - Increased pain, swelling, or drainage at your wound
 - Drainage that smells bad
- Nausea and vomiting
- Trouble breathing
- Sudden, sharp chest pain
- Coughing with blood
- Concerns that cannot wait until your follow-up visit

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

Weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., call the Surgical Specialties Nurse Advice Line at 206.598.4549.

After hours and on weekends and holidays, call 206.598.6190 and ask to page the resident on call for Thoracic Surgery.

Or, ask to page your surgeon:

Dr. _____