

Spirometry and COPD: Testing the Health of Your Lungs



What is spirometry?

Many tests can help you and your healthcare professional detect or screen for diseases or medical problems. If your healthcare professional thinks you may have COPD,* he or she may recommend a test called spirometry (spy-rom-ih-tree). Spirometry is a common test that shows how well your lungs are working. It is also called Pulmonary Function Testing.

What does spirometry do?

- Measures the amount of air you can breathe out and the amount of time it takes you to do this
- Lets your healthcare professional check how well your lungs are working
- Shows if you have any lung problems

Why is spirometry useful for you?

A spirometry test:

- Helps your healthcare professional tell if you have COPD
- Shows how severe your COPD is
- Helps your healthcare professional decide what medicines and other health instructions to give you
- Shows you and your healthcare professional how well your medicine and the other ways that you manage your health are working

*COPD stands for chronic (kron-ick) obstructive (ob-struck-tiv) pulmonary (pull-muh-nair-ee) disease, including chronic bronchitis (bronk-eye-tis), emphysema (em-fuh-zee-muh), or both.

How a Spirometry Test Works



What happens in a spirometry test?

A spirometry test measures the health of your lungs. It shows how much air your lungs can hold and how quickly you can breathe out all of the air.

- Your healthcare professional will show you how it works
- He or she will ask you to take a big breath and then blow into a tube as fast as you can. You may be asked to wear a nose clip to prevent air from leaking
- Keep blowing out in the same way until your healthcare professional tells you to stop
- That's it!

After the test, ask your healthcare professional to explain the results to you.

Ask your healthcare professional about spirometry

What are the important measurements (scores) in a spirometry test?

- How much air you breathe out in one second (Forced Expiratory [ek-spy-rah-tor-ee] Volume in One Second or FEV₁)
- How much air you breathe out in one breath (Forced Vital Capacity or FVC)
- The ratio, which is the relationship between FEV₁ and FVC (FEV₁/FVC ratio)

What do the spirometry scores mean?

- You may have abnormal lung function if you have an FEV₁/FVC ratio of less than 70%
- If you have been diagnosed with COPD, your healthcare professional:
 - Will find out how severe your disease is
 - May compare your spirometry scores to other tests that you may have had previously
 - May give you follow-up spirometry tests to help show if the treatment plan is helping your lungs