

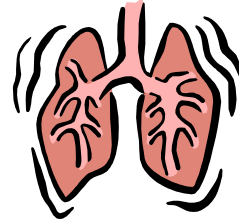
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Pneumothorax

General Information

Like a balloon, the lung is flexible and is filled with air. Also like a balloon, the lung cannot expand by itself; something needs to push it from the inside or pull it from the outside to make it get bigger.

When a person takes in a breath, the chest wall becomes bigger. This creates a vacuum between the inside of the chest wall and the lungs, so the lungs are pulled out, or expanded. A thin tissue membrane that keeps air in the lung covers the surface of the lungs. If a hole is made in this membrane, the lung collapses.



Pneumothorax

Things can happen that changes the normal arrangement of the lung. Something makes a hole in the lung; for example, an outpouching in the lung bursts, there is injury from a fractured rib, or there is a penetrating injury to the chest and lungs. As soon as the hole is made, the lung collapses.

Now every time the chest expands the lung does not go out with it; it remains collapsed. This is a *pneumothorax*. The air you breathe goes down your windpipe (*trachea*), out through the hole in the lung, and into the chest cavity. So, there is air in the chest cavity that collapses the lung.

Treatment

Treatment may involve observation or the insertion of a plastic tube into the chest cavity. The purpose of this tube is to remove the air that is in the chest cavity and allow the lung to expand. The chest tube will be removed when your lung is expanded.

Home Care

Home care after a pneumothorax includes the following:

- You may change the dressing over the chest tube site 24 hours after discharge
- Remaining sutures in the chest tube site will be removed at your follow-up visit
- Avoid smoking
- Continue the deep breathing exercises taught in the hospital and continue to use your Voldyne several times a day
- You may resume a regular diet
- You may shower as you wish, with the dressing off or on. After you dry yourself, replace any dressings with clean, dry ones.
- You may resume sexual activity whenever you choose
- You may return to work when you feel up to it, but let's talk about it first during your follow-up office visit



Call Our Office if:

- You develop increased shortness of breath or chest pain
- Your chest tube site becomes red and hot with increased drainage

- You develop a temperature higher than 101°F
- You have any questions or concerns

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