



**Southport and  
Ormskirk Hospital**  
NHS Trust

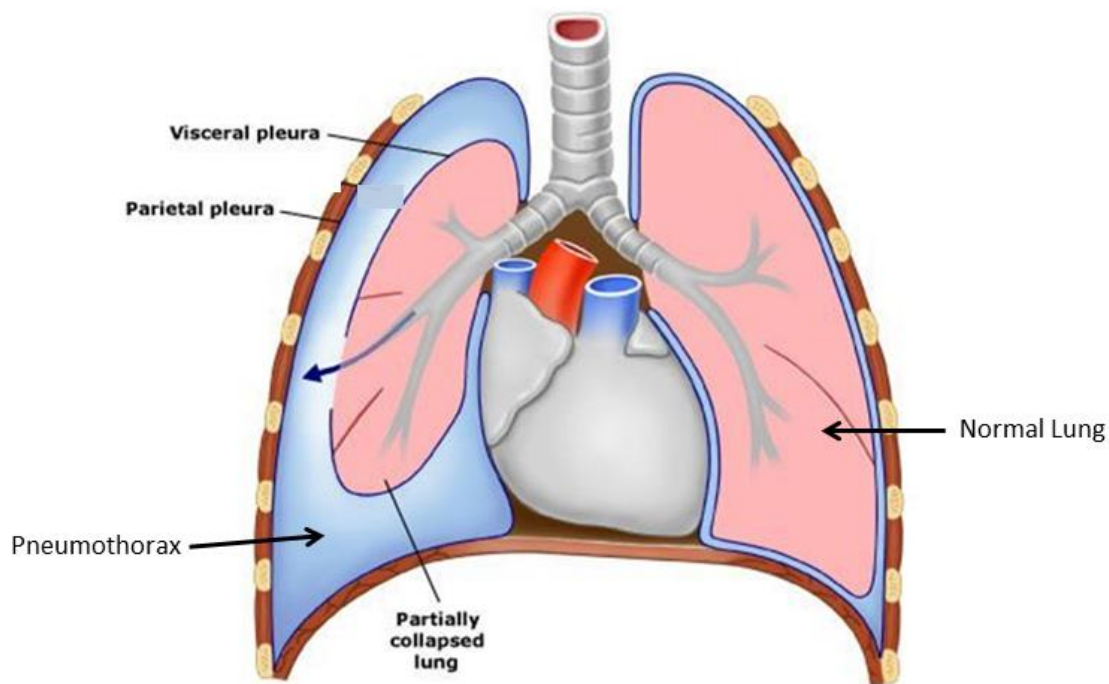
# **PATIENT INFORMATION**

## **Primary Spontaneous Pneumothorax**

**Accident & Emergency Department**



A pneumothorax (collapsed lung) happens when air enters the potential space (pleural space) between the chest wall and your lung. This space is normally a vacuum that keeps the lung expanded. If air gets into this space it can put pressure on one of your lungs, causing part or all of it to collapse.



### **What causes a primary spontaneous pneumothorax?**

Primary spontaneous pneumothorax can happen in an otherwise healthy person for no apparent reason. Risk factors include being tall and thin, male, aged less than 40 and a smoker. About 3 in 10 people who have a primary spontaneous pneumothorax will have a recurrence in later life. In about 10% of cases a definable cause can be found especially where there is a family history of the condition.

A secondary pneumothorax means that the pneumothorax develops as a complication (a “secondary event”) of an existing lung disease or trauma/injury.

## **WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?**

The typical symptom is a sharp, stabbing pain chest pain which develops suddenly usually on one side of the chest, made worse by breathing in. Sometimes you may feel breathless. As a rule, the larger the pneumothorax, the more breathless you become.

A chest x ray will confirm a diagnosis of primary spontaneous pneumothorax.

## **TREATMENT OF A PRIMARY SPONTANEOUS PNEUMOTHORAX**

A small primary spontaneous pneumothorax with minimal symptoms will clear over the next few days as the body heals the leak and the air is gradually absorbed. So no treatment is required at times.

A larger pneumothorax needs air to be aspirated to relieve the symptoms. This is done in hospital with a syringe and a needle. If this doesn't resolve the pneumothorax, it is treated by placing a chest drain (plastic tube) into the chest (pleural space) to allow the trapped air to come out. The latter would require hospital admission.

Follow up would be arranged in Ambulatory Care Unit (ext. 4806/4807) at Southport Hospital with a repeat chest X-ray in 2 weeks' time. Simple painkillers may be required for the first few days.

## **DISCHARGE ADVICE**

1. If you develop worsening of symptoms, chest pains or breathlessness, you should seek medical attention immediately.
2. If you smoke it is important to stop as you are at a greater risk of recurrence of a pneumothorax.
3. Avoid air travel until it is advised to be safe by your doctor which is usually up to 2 weeks after resolution of pneumothorax.
4. Scuba diving should be permanently avoided unless you have further treatment/procedure and advised that is safe, by your doctor.
5. Some people have repeated episodes of pneumothorax, if that is the case, then various procedures can be offered to prevent this.

More information can be found at the British Lung Foundation <https://www.blf.org.uk/support-for-you/pneumothorax>

**During your contact with us, it is important that you are happy with your care and treatment. Please speak to a member of staff and/or the ward/department Sister/Charge Nurse if you have questions or concerns.**

## **MATRON**

A Matron is also available during the hours of 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday. During these periods, ward/department staff can contact Matron to arrange to meet with you. Out of hours, a Senior Nurse can be contacted via the ward/department to deal with any concerns you may have.

## **INFECTION CONTROL REQUEST**

Preventing infections is a crucial part of our patients' care. To ensure that our standards remain high our staff have regular infection prevention and control training and their practice is monitored in the workplace. We ask patients and visitors to assist us in preventing infections by cleaning their hands at regular intervals and informing staff of areas within the hospital that appear soiled.

As a patient there may be times that you are unsure whether a staff member has cleaned their hands; if in doubt please ask the staff member and they will be only too happy to put your mind at ease by cleaning their hands so that you can see them.

## **SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS**

### **ANY CONDITION SPECIFIC DANGER SIGNALS TO LOOK OUT FOR:**

### **CONTACT INFORMATION IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT YOUR CONDITION**

- Your own GP

### **OTHER USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS/CONTACTS:**

NHS 111

Stop Smoking Helpline (Sefton) – 0300 100 1000

Stop Smoking Helpline (West Lancashire) – 0800 328 6297

**Please call 01704 704714 if you need  
this leaflet in an alternative format**

**Southport and Ormskirk Hospital NHS Trust**

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Tel: (01695) 577111

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**FOR APPOINTMENTS**

Telephone (01695) 656680  
Email [soh-tr.appointments@nhs.net](mailto:soh-tr.appointments@nhs.net)

Please remember to complete the **attached** *Friends and Family Test*.

Alternatively, you can complete the *Friends and Family Test* on-line by going to:  
[southportandormskirk.nhs.uk/FFT](https://southportandormskirk.nhs.uk/FFT)

**Thank you**

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