

# **PATIENT INFORMATION**

## **Pneumothorax**

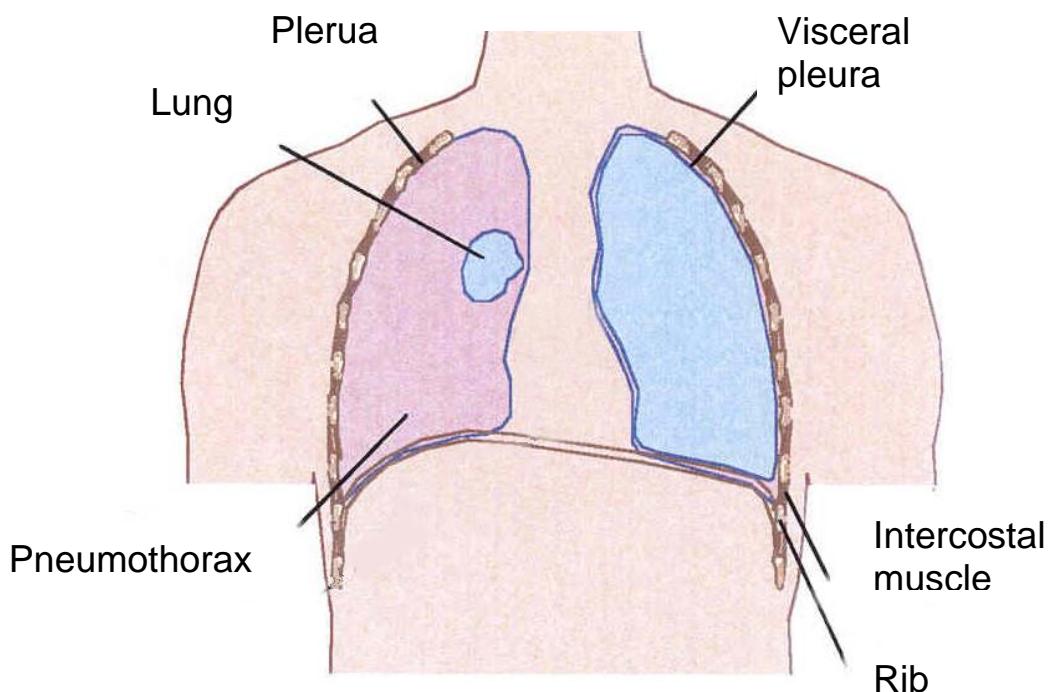
**(Collapsed Lung)**



## **WHAT IS A PNEUMOTHORAX ?**

It is an accumulation of air in the pleural space. The space between the lung and the chest wall. This causes the lung to partly or fully collapse and may cause pain and difficulty in breathing.

A right pneumothorax



## **WHO GETS IT?**

It is a relatively common condition with an incidence of 5.8 – 16.7 per 100000 population per year. It is more common in men, especially young men and in smokers.

## **WHY DOES IT HAPPEN?**

Sometimes for no obvious reason and in apparently normal lungs.

It may occur as a result of chest injuries. It is more likely to happen if you have lung problems.

- Asthma or emphysema.
- A lung infection (pneumonia or tuberculosis).
- As a result of a medical procedure, such as lung biopsy.

## **HOW IS IT DIAGNOSED?**

A history of chest pain, breathlessness and physical examination can suggest a pneumothorax, but it will be confirmed with a chest X-Ray.

## **HOW IS IT TREATED?**

A small pneumothorax may not need any treatment, just observation.

A larger pneumothorax can be treated by removing the air using a local anaesthetic, needle and syringe.

It is sometimes necessary to put a tube through the chest wall, using a local anaesthetic, into the space left by the collapsed lung. This allows the air to escape and the lung to re-inflate. If the lung does not fully re-expand it may be necessary to attach the drain to gentle suction to help remove the air.

Occasionally there is a continuing air leak, which does not seal itself. Pleurodesis may be performed. This is a

procedure to stick the pleural surfaces together. It usually involves putting a liquid or blood, into the pleura space.

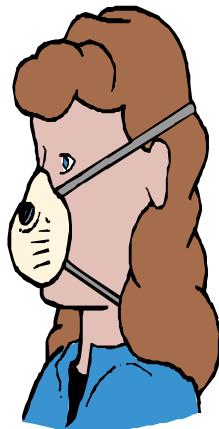
## **PAIN RELIEF**

Sometimes a pneumothorax or a chest drain can cause discomfort or pain. You will be prescribed painkillers, but it is important to let the staff looking after you know how well they are working.

## **OTHER TREATMENT**

You will probably be given some oxygen through a mask to help with breathlessness

Oxygen can help relieve breathlessness.



## **HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE FOR THE LUNG TO RE-INFLATE?**

It will probably take several days. How long you will have to stay in hospital will depend on how long it takes for your lung to re-inflate.

## **WHAT CAN BE DONE TO STOP IT?**

If a pneumothorax fails to recover or you have repeated attacks you may be advised to have an operation to remove the outer pleural covering (pleurectomy).

## **WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?**

If you smoke it is important to try and stop. Stopping smoking is good for your general health and could help to prevent further trouble. Ask your nurse about the smoking cessation service in the hospital.

## **AFTER TREATMENT**

After your pneumothorax is treated, you should not travel by air, until you are told by your doctor that it is fully resolved.

Commercial airlines advise a 6 week gap between having a pneumothorax and travelling by air.

After a pneumothorax you are discouraged from diving permanently, unless a specific surgical procedure has been done.

## **AT HOME**

If your symptoms come back or you develop further breathlessness at any time you should return to the Accident & Emergency Department.

## **ANY QUESTIONS**

This booklet gives brief information about pneumothorax and how it is treated. If there is anything that you don't

understand or want to know ask the doctors or nurses looking after you.

For more information about chest drains ask the staff looking after you for the leaflet "Looking After Your Chest Drain".

For more information about pleurodesis ask the staff looking after you for the leaflet "What is Pleurodesis".

This patient information leaflet is intended to be used to support discussion during your clinical consultation. If there is anything you do not understand or are unsure about, please ask the doctor at your appointment or contact the people below.

**Janet English Nurse Consultant, Medicine, on 01704 547471 and ask for ASCOM 3828.**

## **REFERENCES:**

British Thoracic Society  
Standards of Care Committee  
(2003) Guidelines for the Management of Pleural Disease

Pleural Disease Guidelines 2010. Thorax Vol 65, Supp 2.

## **NOTES**

# NOTES

**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 any questions or concerns.**

## **MATRON**

A Matron is also available during the hours of 9.00 to 5.00 pm 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:**

Increased pain  
Increased breathlessness  
Feeling more unwell

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

Your own GP –  
Ward Nursing Staff or Doctors looking after you on the ward.

### **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**

Ormskirk & District General Hospital  
Wigan Road, Ormskirk, L39 2AZ  
Tel: (01695) 577111

Southport & Formby District General Hospital  
Town Lane, Kew, Southport, PR8 6PN  
Tel: (01704) 547471

**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](http://southportandormskirk.nhs.uk/FFT)  
**Thank you**

Author: Janet English  
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