Pulmonary Function Testing

There are three types of pulmonary function tests done at NVRH:

1) Spirometry
   This test looks at two qualities of your lungs: how much air you blow out and more importantly, how quickly you do it. This test will also assess how much your lungs respond to a bronchodilator (a medication which helps open up the airways in people with asthma or emphysema).

   Approximate time for the test is 30 minutes.

   Procedure: You will blow into a tube as hard as you can. You may get briefly short of breath from this.

2) Full Pulmonary Function Test (PFT)
   This includes spirometry plus two tests which will provide further information about your lungs.

   Approximate time for the test is 60-90 minutes.

   Procedure: In addition to spirometry, you will be asked to do a test where you pant and one test requires that you hold your breath for 8 seconds.

3) Bronchial Provocation
   This involves spirometry. You will either inhale a drug called Methacholine or be exercised on a treadmill. You will be tested by spirometry to see how sensitive your lungs are to this. At the end of the test you will breath in the medication, Albuterol, which will reverse any ill-effects you might feel from either the Methacholine or the exercise.

   Approximate time for the test is 2 hours.

   Procedure: Same as spirometry. Since both tests require frequent measurements, you will do more efforts than with the simple spirometry procedure.

   You will be contacted by the respiratory therapy department several days prior to the test in order to be instructed on the procedure and advised on your medications.

Preparation for all three test types: If you use a short acting bronchodilator (most commonly used are Albuterol, Atrovent, Combivent or Duoneb taken either in the form of an inhaler or an updraft) do not use within four hours of test time. Advair, Serevent, Symbicort or Foradil should not be used for at least 12 hours prior to testing. Spiriva should not be used for 24 hours before the test.

No smoking for at least 2 hours before test time.

For any questions or to cancel or reschedule a test please call Respiratory Care at 748-7511.