

OSHA·NIOSH WORKER INFO

PROTECT
YOURSELF

SPIROMETRY BREATHING TEST



A spirometry breathing test shows how well you can move air in and out of your lungs.

THE NEED FOR SPIROMETRY TESTING

Inhalation of some dusts, gases, or other air contaminants in your workplace as well as some personal exposures, such as cigarette smoking, can harm your lungs. Spirometry testing (a type of pulmonary or lung function test) may identify breathing problems early, which may prevent more serious problems. Spirometry testing is required for some workers by OSHA standards (see Screening and Surveillance: A Guide to OSHA Standards at: www.osha.gov/Publications/ osha3162.pdf).

Spirometry testing may be performed on workers who are required to perform job tasks that are physically demanding, require wearing a respirator, or cause exposure to certain possible breathing hazards. Workers who show signs of breathing problems may also be tested. Depending on your situation, you may be asked to take the test every 6 months to 3 years.

WHAT TO DO DURING THE TEST

- Wear comfortable clothing for the test. You will be asked to stand or sit comfortably and wear a nose clip to stop air from moving through your nose during the test.
- Listen to the spirometry technician's instructions and follow suggestions to get proper results.
- Take a deep breath that completely fills your lungs. Seal your lips around the spirometer mouthpiece. Then, as hard and as fast as you can, blow all of your air into the mouthpiece. Keep blowing until the technician tells you to stop.
- You will usually rest before repeating the test. You will need to give your best effort at least 3 times.

SPIROMETRY RESULTS

A healthcare professional should explain the results to you. The healthcare professional will compare the current test results with your past results (if any) to see if your breathing ability has changed. You have the right to get a copy of your test results.

This guidance document is not an OSHA standard or regulation but contains recommendations that are advisory in nature and intended to assist employers in providing a safe and healthful workplace. The mention of any non-governmental organization or link to its web site in this guidance does not constitute an endorsement by NIOSH or OSHA of that organization, its products or services or web site.

For more complete information:

