

Lung function testing

COVID-19 advice



Lung function testing (including spirometry, peak flow and other breathing tests) generates aerosolised droplets, and may increase the risk of transmission of respiratory viruses to healthcare workers.

Please make sure that lung function testing is needed at this time for your patient. Remember that asymptomatic patients may be infected with acute respiratory viral illnesses (including COVID-19).

Remember

- Lung function testing is an important objective clinical diagnostic tool.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, testing should only be performed on **medically essential cases** where treatment decisions require lung function results.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, testing should be performed in a lung function laboratory. When lung function testing is required outside of the laboratory setting, it should be performed in a negative pressure or single room. If this is not possible and testing needs to occur in the inpatient ward environment, please ensure curtains are drawn around the bed area to reduce the likelihood of any aerosolised droplet dispersion.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, no lung function tests using aerosol generating protocols should be performed. This includes ceasing all bronchial challenge tests. Asthma can be assessed with spirometry, including bronchodilator reversibility. Disease severity and exacerbation risk can be assessed clinically and with a course of therapy.
- All testing needs to be performed using a bacterial/viral filter.
- Prior to lung function testing, patients should be asked screening questions to assess their risk of having COVID-19. These questions should assess history of overseas travel in the last two weeks, close contact with someone who has travelled overseas or with a person known to be COVID-19 positive and any new acute respiratory symptoms (e.g. runny nose, sore throat or fever).
- During testing where possible, staff should be positioned ≥ 1.5 metres away and out of the 'blast zone' or line of cough.
- Lung function testing should be performed using contact and droplet precautions.
- Local sites are able to draw on the advice of peak bodies to further assist their local decision making. Advice is available from the Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand (TSANZ) and The Australia and the New Zealand Society of Respiratory Scientists (ANZSRS) <https://www.thoracic.org.au/documents/item/1864>.



Important consideration: Lung function laboratories

It is important that lung function laboratories remain open for essential tests. Contact and droplet precautions must be implemented during all testing.

This is in line with the ANZSRS, TSANZ and ATS recommendations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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