Discharge instructions for patients who have undergone treatment for a spontaneous pneumothorax

Information for you

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You have been investigated and treated in the Ambulatory Care Area with a spontaneous pneumothorax.

What is a pneumothorax?

Your lungs lie inside your chest space. If the lung gets a puncture from an accident or from a problem in the lung, air can move into the chest space and cause the lung to collapse. This is a pneumothorax.

Who gets a pneumothorax?

If it is not related to an accident, then it usually occurs in young people (especially men) who have a weakness at the top of the lung. Often, when this happens, only minor pain and breathlessness is experienced. If this person has another problem, such as asthma or emphysema, they can become more unwell.

What can be done about a pneumothorax?

Sometimes, when a pneumothorax is only very small, it can be left alone to absorb the air on its own. If the pneumothorax is larger, you may have had the air removed by passing a tube into your
chest to remove it. Often, this can mean you can go home the same day and be seen as an outpatient. If it is unsuccessful, the tube may have to stay in your chest for a few days and you would be admitted to hospital.

**Will it happen again?**

After one pneumothorax, the chance of it happening again is only 1 in 4, but this chance rises if it happens more than once. Sometimes, if you suffer with repeated episodes of pneumothorax, a specialist may decide to perform surgery to stop it happening again.

**Is there anything that I can do?**

If you smoke it is important to stop as you are at greater risk of recurrence of a pneumothorax.

**When will I be reviewed?**

You will be given an appointment to see a chest specialist at the Respiratory Clinic in approximately 7 days for review.
Is there anything I should look out for when I go home?

If you develop further breathlessness or chest pain after discharge you should seek urgent review. Contact Ambulatory Care Area 01563 827467 for advice.

Is there anything else I need to know?

Air travel should be avoided until the pneumothorax has resolved and been confirmed on x-ray.

It is recommended that it is not possible to scuba dive, for life, after having a spontaneous pneumothorax.

Where can I find further information?

Further information about pneumothorax can be found on the following websites:

British Lung Foundation
• www.blf.org.uk/conditions/detail/pneumothorax

Pneumothorax.org
• www.pneumothorax.org
Remember:

If your breathlessness worsens it is essential to return to the Emergency Department immediately.

You can telephone for advice if you are unsure:

• Ambulatory Care Area, Crosshouse: 01563 827467
• NHS 24: 111
• Or contact your family doctor (GP).
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