

# Diagnosing Mesothelioma

## A Quick Guide

### Contents

This is a brief summary of 'Diagnosing mesothelioma' from our website. You will find more detailed information on there. In this information there are sections on

- Tests for mesothelioma
- Further tests for mesothelioma
- Questions for your doctor

You can view this information in a larger print on our website.

### Tests for mesothelioma

You will usually see your family doctor first, who will examine you, and ask about your general health and symptoms. Your doctor will ask you to lie down for a physical examination, and feel the area where there is pain or swelling. It may feel tender, or it may be possible to feel a lump. Your doctor will listen to your chest, to see if there are any signs of fluid collecting.

After your examination, your doctor may need to refer you to hospital for tests and X-rays. Or you may be referred directly to a specialist.

### At the hospital

If you see a specialist, he or she will ask you about your medical history and symptoms. The specialist will then examine you by feeling the area that is painful or swollen. You may have some blood tests to check your general health.

If your doctor suspects you may have mesothelioma, you may have quite a few tests. This is because it can be difficult to diagnose. These tests include X-rays, a CT scan, a thoracoscopy or laparoscopy with a biopsy, and fluid drainage from around the lungs or the abdominal cavity (thoracocentesis or abdomoparacentesis).

### Further tests for mesothelioma

You may have further tests to find out whether the mesothelioma has spread. This is called staging. The stage is important because it helps your doctor to decide on the best treatment. But it may not be possible to be sure of the stage of mesothelioma without having surgery. The tests you may have include:

- **PET-CT scan.** A scan that combines a PET (Positron Emission Tomography) scan and a CT (Computerised Tomography) scan. PET scans show up cancer cells. CT scans give a clear picture of the inside of the body. Doing the two scans together can give the doctors a more detailed picture.
- **Ultrasound scan.** A scan which uses sound waves to build up a picture of the inside of the body.
- **Mediastinoscopy.** An examination of the mediastinum (the central area of the chest).

Your doctor will ask you to come back to the hospital when your test results are available. This is bound to take a little time, even if only a day or two. You may feel very anxious during this time. While you are waiting for results, it may help to talk to a close friend or relative about how you are feeling. Or you may want to contact a support group to talk to someone who has been through similar experiences.

### What to ask your doctor about tests for mesothelioma

- What tests are you going to do?
- What are you looking for?
- Will the tests show whether I have mesothelioma?
- Will the tests show whether my cancer can be operated on?
- Are any of the tests painful?
- Do any of the tests have after effects?
- Can I have these tests as an outpatient?
- Will I have to stay in hospital for any of the tests?
- Should I bring someone with me when I have the tests?
- How long will the results take?
- Who will give me the test results?

**For more information**, visit our website <http://www.cruk.org/about-cancer>

You will find a wide range of detailed, up to date information for people affected by cancer, including a clinical trials database that you can search for trials in the UK. Our information is based on the best current scientific evidence and reviewed regularly by leading clinicians and experts in health and social care.

For answers to your questions about cancer call our Cancer Information Nurses on 0808 800 4040 9am till 5pm Monday to Friday.

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