Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Breathlessness Clinic

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Breathlessness Clinic

Patient Information

Cardiorespiratory

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Introduction

Breathlessness is a common presenting symptom in doctors' surgeries, with numerous causes. It is a subjective, distressing sensation of an awareness of difficulty of breathing.

Breathlessness is reported by around 10% of the general population, varying with severity, social status, and increasing with age.

A delayed or inaccurate diagnosis of breathlessness means people don't get the treatment they need and can end up in hospital unnecessarily.

Aims

The aim of the Breathlessness clinic is to gain an early and accurate diagnosis for the cause of your breathlessness.

This will be done by a face to face assessment with access to a number of diagnostic tests on the day of your appointment.

We hope by the end of the appointment that you leave with a clear plan of what happens next in terms of your management of breathlessness symptoms.

What to Expect at your appointment

The appointment may last up to 2 hours and family members are welcome to attend with you.

You will have a face to face assessment with a specialist clinician, where you can discuss your symptoms of breathlessness in detail.

The specialist clinician will ask a number of questions that include:

- What causes you to be breathless?
- What eases your breathlessness?
- How long have you been breathless for?

There are many causes to breathlessness and the specialist clinician may ask other questions related to anxiety or if you have ever smoked.

The specialist clinician will also undertake a physical assessment where we will check things like how fast you are breathing, how fast your heart is beating, and listen to your lungs with a stethoscope.

Following this, the specialist clinician may arrange for a number of diagnostic tests to happen within the same appointment.

The diagnostic tests can include:

- Blood tests.
- Breathing tests.
- Electrocardiography (ECG).

Explanation of the benefit a specific diagnostic test will be given, and your consent gained before any diagnostic test is undertaken.

At the end of the assessment, we will have a lot more information about possible causes of your breathlessness than we did at the start of the appointment.

The Outcome of your assessement

The specialist clinician will discuss the outcome of the assessment with you, including results of all the tests undertaken. Some results such as blood tests may not be available on the same day, but once received, the specialist clinician will contact you with the results of these as soon as possible.

- Where the diagnostic tests are not fully conclusive to a clear cause, we may arrange further diagnostic tests for a later date.Further diagnostic tests are based on clinical findings and are used specifically for gathering more information in finding a cause for your breathlessness. These diagnostic tests can include:Echocardiogram (ultrasound scan of your heart)

- CT scan of heart/lungs.

- Home ECG/blood pressure montoring.

- Exercise tests.

- Sleep study tests.

The specialist clinician will oversee the results of any additional tests and aim to direct any significant results to the correct specialist team to continue your care where required.

You will be given a copy of all clinical letters following the appointment. They will detail all the test results and include a clear plan of what happens next in terms of follow up care.

Patient Centred Care

The Clinical Diagnostic Centre (CDC) at Leigh Infirmary is one of a number of centres around the country that have been created to improve access to diagnostic testing.

With this Breathlessness clinic, we hope to eliminate the need for multiple appointments waiting for relevant tests; we aim to:

- Achieve earlier diagnosis.
- Improve quality of care for patients.
- Deliver a more personalised diagnostic experience for patients.
- Reduce waiting times.

The Breathlessness clinic at Leigh Infirmary was created in April 2024 and we want to build the service around the people that use it. On attending the clinic, you will be asked to give feedback on the experience you had. We value your feedback, as it helps us know what people want, which benefits future patients and enhances the quality of our service.

The specialist clinician will provide you with a paper or electronic questionnaire at the end of the appointment. A copy can be found here:



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