

*If you have
any questions
or concerns,
please talk
with the tech.*

Diffusing Capacity (DLCO)

A DLCO tests your ability to move an inhaled gas from your lungs to the blood stream. This test involves inhaling and exhaling air containing a small amount of carbon monoxide.

A DLCO test is performed in the Pulmonary Function Lab and takes about 10 to 20 minutes. If this test is done as part of a full pulmonary function test (PFT), your total test time is 30 to 60 minutes.

Before the Test

There is no special preparation for this test. Please do not smoke for at least 4 hours before the test.

On the day of the test, plan to arrive 15 minutes before your test time. If you wear glasses, hearing aids or dentures, please have them for the test. Be sure to bring:

- Your doctor's written order for the test (if one was given to you)
- A list of allergies
- A list of all your current medications (prescription, over-the-counter, and herbals)
- Photo ID
- Medical insurance information
- Medicare card (Medicare patients only)

Please come to the Galter Pavilion, 201 East Huron Street. Check in at the reception desk on the 8th floor.

Parking is available for patients and visitors in the garage at 222 East Huron Street, across from the Feinberg and Galter pavilions. For discounted rates, please bring your parking ticket with you. Tickets can be validated at the Customer Services Desks on the 1st and 2nd floor of the Feinberg and Galter pavilions; 1st floor of Prentice (including the Prentice 24-hour desk near the Superior entrance).

Please tell the technologist (tech) if you have claustrophobia (discomfort with closed-in spaces).

During the Test

You will be seated in a chair in a glass-enclosed booth (body plethysmograph) and a small plastic clip will be placed on your nose. Using a filtered mouthpiece, you will be asked to inhale air that has a small amount of carbon monoxide and to hold your breath for 10 seconds. Then you will exhale into the mouthpiece. These steps are repeated and measurements are recorded. During the test, it is important to keep a tight seal around the mouthpiece.

After the Test

You are free to leave as soon as the test is done. There are no diet or activity restrictions.

Initial test results are sent to your doctor within 48 hours. A full report follows in about 5 business days.

If you have questions about this test, please call the Pulmonary Function Lab at 312.926.3195.

Northwestern Medicine – Health Information Resources

For more information, contact Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Alberto Culver Health Learning Center (HLC) at hlc@nm.org, or by calling 312.926.5465. Health information professionals can help you find the information you need and provide you with personal support at no charge.

For more information about Northwestern Medicine, please visit our website at nm.org.

Para asistencia en español, por favor llamar al Departamento de Representantes para Pacientes al 312.926.3112.

The entities that come together as Northwestern Medicine are committed to representing the communities we serve, fostering a culture of inclusion, delivering culturally competent care, providing access to treatment and programs in a nondiscriminatory manner and eliminating healthcare disparities. For questions, please call either Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Patient Representatives Department at 312.926.3112, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363 or the Northwestern Medical Group Patient Representatives Department at 312.695.1100, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363.

Developed by: NMH Pulmonary Function Lab

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