

## Video-Assisted Thoracoscopic Surgery (VATS)

### Purpose

During video-assisted thoracoscopic surgery (VATS), the surgeon can:

- Diagnose or treat a problem in the chest
- Determine how far the disease has spread in the chest
- Remove a mass within the lung
- Biopsy the lining of the chest wall or lymph nodes in the center of the chest
- Stop pleural fluid from building up in the chest

The procedure uses a small video camera that is inserted into the patient's chest via an instrument called a thoracoscope. With this camera, your doctor can see inside the chest cavity. Traditional types of surgery that requires a large incision (cut), such as a thoracotomy, may be avoided by using this procedure. The procedure can spare the patient some of the pain experienced after surgery and potentially lead to a quicker recovery.

### Preparation

At least 2 to 3 weeks before surgery, **do not** smoke.

Discontinue aspirin products and blood thinning medications 5 to 7 days before surgery.

#### **Blood Thinning Medicines to Avoid Before Surgery**

Certain medicines thin the blood. Since they keep the blood from clotting, you may need to stop taking them before surgery.

Tell your doctor about all medicines you are taking or have taken recently. Include prescriptions, over-the-counter medicines, nutritional supplements, vitamins, minerals and herbal products, even if they are not listed below. Your doctor or nurse will tell you which medicines you will need to avoid.

Listed below are just some of the medicines that affect how the blood clots.

### **Anti-platelet Agents**

- Clopidogrel (Plavix<sup>®</sup>)
- Ticlopidine (Ticlid<sup>®</sup>)
- Dipyridamole (Persantine<sup>®</sup>, Aggrenox<sup>®</sup>)
- Fondaparinux (Arixtra<sup>®</sup>)
- Ephedra/Ma Huang<sup>®</sup>

### **Heparin**

#### **Low-molecular Weight Heparins**

- Dalteparin (Fragmin<sup>®</sup>)
- Enoxaparin (Lovenox<sup>®</sup>)
- Tinzaparin (Innohep<sup>®</sup>)

#### **Warfarin (Coumadin<sup>®</sup>)**

#### **Over-the-Counter Medicines**

- Aspirin
- Celecoxib (Celebrex<sup>®</sup>)
- Ginseng
- Garlic
- Gingko biloba
- Naproxen (Anaprox<sup>®</sup>, Aleve<sup>®</sup>, Naprosyn<sup>®</sup>)
- Ibuprofen (Motrin<sup>®</sup>, Advil<sup>®</sup>, Nuprin<sup>®</sup>)
- St. John's Wort

The night before surgery:

- Scrub your chest thoroughly from neck to waist and under your arms with soap.
- **Do not** eat or drink anything after midnight.

### **Procedure**

In the operating room:

- An intravenous line (IV) will be put into a vein in your hand or arm.
- You will be given medicine to make you sleep.
- You will be turned on your side.
- Your heart will be monitored and you will receive oxygen so you can breathe easily.

While you are asleep, several small incisions (cuts) will be made in your skin. These small cuts will be made on the front or side of the chest, or back. The thoracoscope will be passed through the incisions so the surgeon can see if any problems exist. If a tumor or mass is found, a small piece of tissue will be removed and sent to the pathology lab to be examined. The surgeon's

visual examination and the results of the pathology report will determine if more procedures are needed. A thoracotomy (surgery to open the chest) may be performed if needed at the same time or at a later date.

You will have a tube inserted in your chest during surgery to help drain fluid and re-expand your lung(s). Usually, the tube is removed 2 to 4 days after surgery.

## **After the Procedure**

- You will wake up in the recovery room where you will be monitored for 2 to 3 hours.
- You will then go to your hospital room where you will stay for 2 to 4 days after surgery.
- **Do not** smoke at all after the surgery. Smoking cessation programs are available. Ask your doctor or nurse for more information.

## **Discharge Instructions**

When you leave the hospital, you should receive a date and time for a follow-up appointment. During the follow-up visit, the doctor will discuss the results of your surgery.