

Having talc powder inserted around your lung to prevent build up of air or fluid

Department of Respiratory Medicine

Last reviewed: July 2025

Next review: July 2028

Information for Patients

Leaflet number: 1167 Version: 2

What is talc pleurodesis?

Talc pleurodesis is a medical procedure. We put medical talcum powder (talc) into the space between the inner and outer lining of the lung (called **pleural space**). We do this to cause irritation in the lung linings (called pleura). Talc pleurodesis procedure is done during a stay in hospital.

Why do I need a talc pleurodesis procedure?

Sometimes fluid or air can collect in the pleural space stopping your lung from fully expanding when you breath. This can make you feel breathless. Build up of fluid in the pleural space is called **pleural effusion**. Build up of air in the pleural space is called a **pneumothorax**.

The irritation caused by the talc makes the inner and outer linings of the lung stick together. This closes the pleural space.

First you will have a chest drain put in to let the fluid or air drain out from your pleural space. We will give you a separate information leaflet about your chest drain.

We mix talc with a sterile fluid. We give this fluid through the tube that we insert into your pleural space to drain air or fluid (called chest drain). There is a 3 way tap system to make sure the talc goes into your pleural space and not the drain bottle.

What are the benefits?

Talc pleurodesis stops the build up of fluid and air in pleural space. If successful it should help improve your breathing. It is successful in about 7 in 10 people who have this treatment.

Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice

Visit www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

What are the risks?

This is a very safe procedure with few risks. The doctor or nurse specialist will talk about the risks with you when asking you to sign the consent form.

Some possible risks are:

- **Pain:** this is common because talc causes irritation to the lung linings. We try to help this pain by giving you painkillers and flushing local anaesthetic through your chest drain into your pleural space before the procedure. Local anaesthetic is a medication used to numb a specific part of the body. Any pain is often only temporary and should go away within hours.
- **Fever:** it is possible to have a fever as a reaction to the talc and irritation of the lung linings. This does not often last long.
- **Infection:** we use a sterile process to lower any risk of infection.
- **Shortness of breath:** you may have mild shortness of breath. This only lasts a couple of minutes. If this lasts longer let staff know.
- **Fast heartbeat:** you may feel your heart beating fast just after the procedure. This should go back to normal shortly.
- **Failure of the procedure:** the procedure is successful in about 7 in 10 people. This means 3 in 10 people could fail to have their lung linings stuck together.
- **Allergic reaction:** there is a risk that you may be allergic to talc or the local anaesthetic. We will stop the procedure right away if you show symptoms of a reaction. We will then treat you for the allergic reaction.
- **Adult respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS):** this is when you have serious breathing problems due to the talc causing more severe inflammation to the tissues of the lungs and the chest wall. This is one of the most serious possible complications but is very rare. It can happen in 1 in every 1000 patients. We will monitor you closely during and after the procedure to check for any signs of this.

Are there other treatment options?

Indwelling pleural catheter (IPC) is another treatment option. This is where we will insert a small tube into your chest. This tube stays in your chest and you go home with it on the same day it is inserted. It can be removed later if you no longer need this treatment. This is a day case procedure.

Who will carry out the procedure?

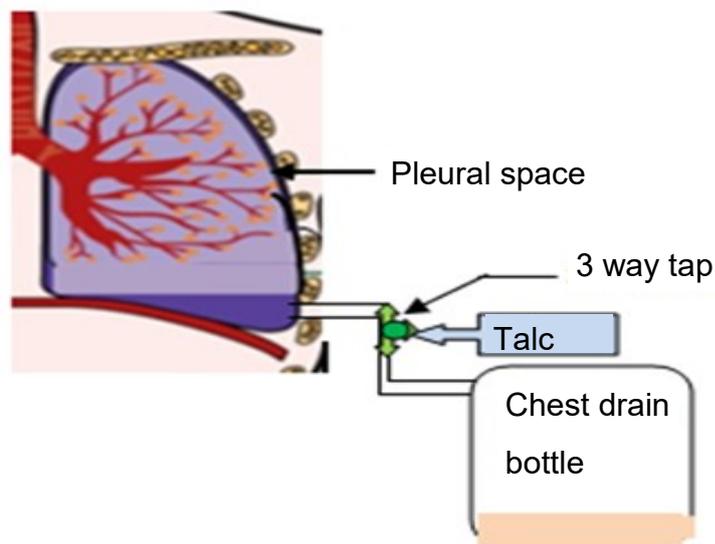
A trained health care professional such as a doctor, nurse specialist or physician's associate will carry out the procedure. Leicester's Hospitals is a teaching hospital so we sometimes have trainee health care professionals performing the procedure, but this will always be done under supervision of a trained professional.

How is talc pleurodesis carried out?

First you will have a chest drain. This is a tube that we insert into your pleural space to let the fluid or air drain out from your pleural space.

We mix talc with a sterile fluid so that we can give this treatment through your chest drain and into your pleural space. We use a 3 way tap system to do this:

1. We will ask you to sign a consent form to confirm if you are happy to go ahead. We will do the procedure in hospital, at your bedside or the procedure room.
2. You do not need to remove any clothing for the procedure.
3. We will ask you to sit or lay comfortably on your hospital bed.
4. Your chest drain will be flushed with a sterile saline solution to check there is no blockage. Local anaesthetic will be given through the drain using the 3 way tap system. This will be left for a few minutes for it to take effect.
5. We will give the talc through the chest drain using the 3 way tap system.
6. We will close off the drain using the 3 way tap to keep the talc in your pleural space and to stop it draining out into the chest drain bottle.
7. We will monitor you after the procedure. We will come to see you regularly for the next couple of hours. We will also monitor the output from your drain.



How long will it take?

Talc pleurodesis takes only a few minutes. But we will need to monitor you afterwards. We measure the output of your chest for as long as your drain is in place.



Aftercare advice

After the procedure we will give you painkillers. We will monitor you closely within the first few hours after the procedure. If you feel unwell or notice any breathing problems, please tell a member of staff right away.

As we need to monitor your drain output for 24 hours, you will need to stay in hospital for at least 1 day after the procedure.

If a lot of fluid or air is still coming out after the procedure, it means the procedure has not worked. We will talk about further treatment with you.

If the procedure has worked, your chest drain will be removed. If you begin to feel unwell after you are discharged, please get urgent medical help by calling 111 or 999. You should explain that you have recently had talc pleurodesis and the reason for it.

Contact details

You can contact staff from Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays) between 9am to 5pm:

Secretary to consultants: 0116 258 3488

Pleural Specialist Nurse: 0116 258 3975

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل
જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।
Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk