



A Better Test for Spotting and Monitoring Lung Problems

Many southeast Georgia residents can breathe easier thanks to new technology at the Southeast Georgia Health System Camden Campus.

Known as whole-body plethysmography, the noninvasive, painless test measures how well the lungs are working. It can detect if someone's lungs were exposed to and damaged by toxic substances, and it also monitors lung function in patients with asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), lung cancer or COVID-19 lung complications.

"This test identifies decreases in pulmonary function a patient might not be aware of, as well as declining lung function that requires medication or lifestyle changes," says Herman Levy, M.D., board-certified pulmonologist with Southeast Georgia Physician Associates-Pulmonary Medicine in St. Marys.

Many advantages

To perform the test, a patient sits or stands inside a clear, airtight chamber about the size of a telephone booth. They then inhale or exhale into a breathing tube. As they breathe, the plethysmograph measures air pressure changes inside the chamber, along with changes in mouth pressure or flow rate under certain breathing conditions.

"It's a very accurate way to measure lung function," Dr. Levy says. "That's an advantage for pulmonologists and, for patients, whole-body plethysmography is a less stressful experience compared to less advanced testing technologies."

Another advantage is the clear testing chamber. Its walls are composed of transparent glass, allowing patients to see the room around them as well as their technician. Before the Camden Campus acquired whole-body plethysmography, children and people who are disabled or claustrophobic had to travel to Brunswick or Jacksonville to get this test. If a patient can't get inside the chamber for any reason, they can be tested outside the unit, though their results may be somewhat limited.

Meeting a crucial need

For anyone with lung problems, plethysmography is an ally. Dr. Levy foresees an increased need for pulmonary function testing, especially now.

"We believe that COVID-19 may leave some people with

conditions that compromise the integrity of their lungs," Dr. Levy explains.

"Additionally, a lot of people are told there's nothing they can do about COPD, which may lead them to feel depressed. Serial pulmonary function studies are an excellent way to monitor pulmonary disease processes and prevent or slow disease progression. It's another way to help people achieve a better quality of life."



Breathe easier

To schedule an appointment with Dr. Levy, call Southeast Georgia Physician Associates-Pulmonary Medicine at **912-540-6740**.