

What is a chest tube?

A chest tube is a soft, flexible tube that is put into the space between the lung and the chest wall. This is called the pleural space. The tube helps drain fluid or air from this area.

Why does my child need a chest tube?

In some situations, such as an infection or an injury, fluid builds up in the pleural space and makes it hard to breathe. Placing a chest tube in the area drains the fluid. This will make it easier for your child to breathe. Your child will be more comfortable. Taking fluid from the area will speed up the healing process.

How is it placed?

1. Your child will be given medicines to control pain. It will also make your child sleepy for the procedure. This will help your child stay relaxed and comfortable.
2. With the help of ultrasound or X-ray, the doctor locates and puts a needle in the area that has the most fluid.
3. The chest tube is secured to the skin. A bandage is put over the exit site.
4. The chest tube is connected to suction to help the fluid drain.

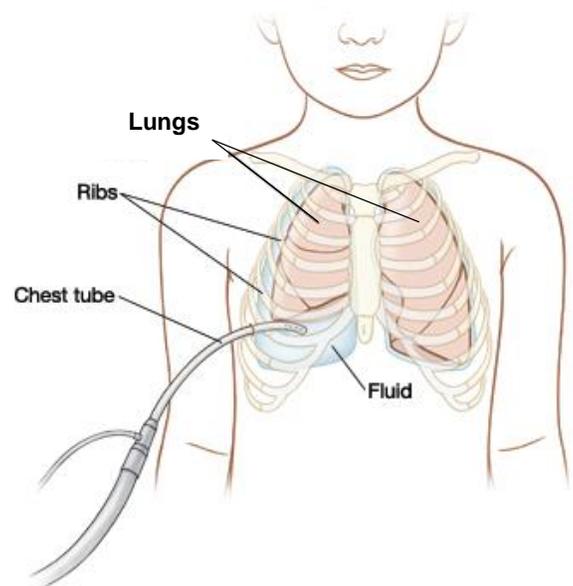
It normally takes 30 to 60 minutes to put the chest tube in.

What are some risks of the procedure?

- Most children feel some discomfort while the tube is in place. The amount of pain varies between children. If your child has pain, medicine will be given.
- Bleeding may occur in the pleural space or the chest wall. This is rare.
- Air may enter the pleural space during the procedure. This is called a pneumothorax. The chest tube will treat the pneumothorax.
- Rarely, placing a chest tube can result in an infection of the pleural space.
- Rarely, a nerve in the chest wall can be injured.

What care is needed after the procedure?

- The chest tube may stay attached to suction while it is in place.
- The tube may be flushed on a regular schedule to keep it working as it should.
- Your provider team will keep track of the drainage from the tube on a regular schedule.



Care after the procedure continued

- A daily chest X-ray will be done in the imaging department. This is part of the routine care of the chest tube.
- There may be some discomfort with having the chest tube in place. Pain medicine will be ordered. It can be given as needed for pain related to your child's illness.
- The tube will be left in place until most of the fluid or air is gone.
- Once in a while, the tube may need to be repositioned.
- If fluid is in separate areas of the pleural space, a medicine may need to be used to help these areas to drain. You will be given more information if this treatment is needed.
- The chest tube is removed at the bedside. Pain medicine can be given before removal to help with any discomfort.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This sheet was created to help you care for your child or family member. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment and follow-up.