

Thoracic Surgery

What is thoracic surgery?

[Thoracic](#) surgery encompasses all operations that are performed on organs of the body between the neck and the [abdomen](#). Surgery on the heart is more specifically referred to as [cardiovascular](#) surgery, [thoracic](#) surgery most commonly refers to the lungs.

Why do I need thoracic surgery?

The most frequent reason for having [thoracic](#) surgery is to repair or assess damage to the lungs due to disease or injury. Continuing causes are cancer, trauma and [pulmonary](#) diseases.

How does my doctor know I need surgery?

Early detection with chest X-ray may be the first indication of possible lung problems. Further testing would then be done including [imaging tests](#) such as a [CT scan](#), or [MRI](#) and [pulmonary functions tests](#). Relying on these test results surgery may be needed.

What are the different incisions for thoracic surgery?

Lung surgery can be performed using various approaches. Usually the chest is entered through a [thoracoscopy](#) and a [thoracotomy](#).

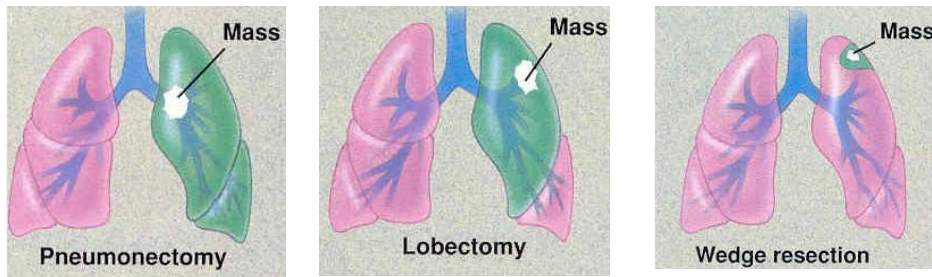
When am I a candidate for a thoracoscopy?

[Thoracoscopy](#) is used when your surgeon does not need to directly visualize your entire lung or inner chest. This type of procedure is used for, draining fluid off of your lungs ([pleural effusions](#)), treatment of a [collapsed lung](#), as well as biopsies or the removal of small portions of tissue ([wedge resection](#)).

Why would I need a thoracotomy?



A [thoracotomy](#) is needed when the surgeon needs to directly visualize large portions of your lung or inner chest cavity. This approach is used for operations, such as the removal of your entire lung ([pneumonectomy](#)), or removal of a portion of the lung ([lobectomy](#)).



How long will my operation take?

Depending on the approach and complexity of your procedure the operation can take between one and six hours.

What can I expect once I get home?

As with any other surgical incision, daily cleansing and observation for signs of infection is essential. The initial swelling around the affected area should slowly disappear over a period of four to six weeks. If manipulation of the ribs was necessary increased discomfort will be present. Pain medication will help relieve this. You will not be able to drive or lift more than 10 pounds for at least four weeks. Additionally physical activities involving your upper body will be restricted for the first six weeks after your operation.