

PH TESTING FAQ

Testing

- **Pulmonary Function Testing** – breathing tests to determine airway (lung) function
- **Electrocardiogram (EKG)** – noninvasive measurement of electrical activity in the heart, to look for heart damage and/or abnormal heart rhythms
- **6-Minute Walk Test (6MWT)** – measures how far a person can walk in 6 minutes; used to provide an estimate of exercise capacity
- **Treadmill Test** – measures how long a person can walk on a treadmill with increasing speed and incline; a more formalized way to determine exercise capacity
- **Cardiopulmonary Exercise Testing** – measurements of heart

Imaging Tests

- **Chest X-ray** – a large photographic picture of the heart and lungs. It is used to determine if pneumonia or lung scarring is present, if the heart and pulmonary arteries are enlarged, and if there is fluid in the lungs.
- **Computed tomography (CT or “CAT”) scanning** – a special X-ray of the body, providing more detailed images than a chest x-ray. It is used to examine the heart and lungs in detail. It may also be used to look for blood clots in the lungs.
- **Cardiac magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)** – a special non-X-ray imaging technique that, among other uses, can accurately measure right ventricular chamber volumes and function. Many MRI scanners involve being in a relatively enclosed space; patients with claustrophobia may not tolerate them or may require some sedation to improve comfort during the scan. Certain devices such as pacemakers are generally not compatible with MRI testing due to the magnetic field generated during the scan.
- **Echocardiogram** – a specialized ultrasound of the heart. It is used to take pictures of the heart muscle, heart valves, and to estimate pulmonary artery (PA) pressure.

Cardiac catheterization (“cath”)

The right heart cath is the "gold standard" test for confirming PAH. A catheter is placed into the veins and advanced into the pulmonary arteries to measure pressures in the right side of the heart and the lungs, and cardiac output (the amount of blood that the heart pumps).

Bloodwork Testing

- **Basic metabolic panel (BMP, Chem 10)**—checks electrolytes for body chemistry, kidney function (creatinine, blood urea nitrogen).
- **Complete blood count (CBC)**
- **Liver Function (LFTs)** - generally liver enzymes such as AST, ALT
- **Thyroid Function** (e.g. TSH, total or free thyroxine)
- **ANA** - Antinuclear antibody, a screening test for suspected connective tissue (autoimmune) disease
- **Brain natriuretic peptide (BNP)** – A small protein made by the heart; used to understand the degree of right heart stretch as a marker for stress.
- **INR** – clotting test done to evaluate effect of warfarin (Coumadin)