How to Prepare: Bronchoscopy

Preparation for bronchoscopy is mostly about fasting, sedation and the journey home:

- ☐ You will be asked not to eat for several hours beforehand — commonly around six hours — with small sips of water allowed until nearer the time. Follow your appointment letter exactly; a full stomach and sedation do not mix safely.
- ☐ Tell the team about medicines that affect blood clotting, about allergies, and about any previous problems with sedation or anaesthetics. Ask whether to take your usual medicines on the day.
- ☐ Arrange a lift home and someone to stay with you afterwards: sedation means no driving, no machinery and no important decisions for the rest of the day.
- ☐ Remove dentures, glasses and contact lenses before the test if asked, and tell the team about loose teeth, crowns or a bad neck.
- ☐ If you use inhalers or oxygen, bring them with you and tell the team — they will plan around them.
- ☐ Mention a current chest infection, fever or worsening breathlessness when you arrive; occasionally the test is postponed or the plan changes.

What to expect

Before	You change into a gown, a cannula goes into your hand, and monitors are attached for pulse, blood pressure and oxygen. The back of your throat is numbed with a spray that tastes bitter and makes swallowing feel strange — that is expected and wears off.
During	The thin scope passes through your nose or mouth and down the windpipe while you breathe normally. The numbing means the tube is felt as pressure rather than pain, though it can make you cough at first; more numbing medicine can be sprayed through the scope.
After	You rest in recovery until the sedation lifts and your oxygen and blood pressure are steady — usually one to two hours. Your throat stays numb for a while, so you will not eat or drink until swallowing is safe again — hot drinks especially.

Medically reviewed by Dr. Mohamed Ibrahim, MD, PhD — physician-scientist. Last reviewed October 2026.

This handout is general information to help you prepare; it does not replace the instructions from your own care team. If your clinic gave you different instructions, follow theirs.