

Pulmonary Function Testing at Deckerville Community Hospital

By Irene Cole

Having healthy lungs is something a lot of us taken for granted, but for many people normal breathing is a health concern. Knowing what the problem is and getting the best treatment for it is essential. Doctors determine this by evaluating a person's respiratory system through a group of tests known as Pulmonary Function Testing or PFT.

Deckerville Hospital started doing PFT in 1997 and offers this service to any patient who has a doctor's order to have it done. Specially trained employees Katie Loss and Joyce Susalla do the testing and the results are interpreted by board – certified pulmonologists on staff at DCH.



“When someone comes for the testing, we use a special machine that looks like a telephone booth. This controls the air around the person to give accurate information on how well their lungs work. We can measure how much air is breathed in and exhaled out and the time it takes to do it. We may use special medications for some of the tests”, said Loss.

People with emphysema, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or asthma rely on PFT for the management of their disease. The testing is also used to help diagnose causes for shortness of breath, or may be done before a person has surgery to know how healthy their lungs are.

According to Loss, the testing usually takes about an hour. “We want the patient to be relaxed and unhurried; we coach them on what to do and allow rest periods as we go”, says Loss. “Joyce and I schedule testing on certain days and times to accommodate people's busy schedules”, adding, “sometimes we do the testing when the patient is here for their clinic appointment with the pulmonary specialist”.