Spirometry:
What Is it and Why Do I Need It?

Adapted from a SAWBO Animation

Spirometry is a quick, simple, and easy breathing test for your doctor to evaluate your lungs.

Spirometry measures how fast and how much you can blow out of your lungs.

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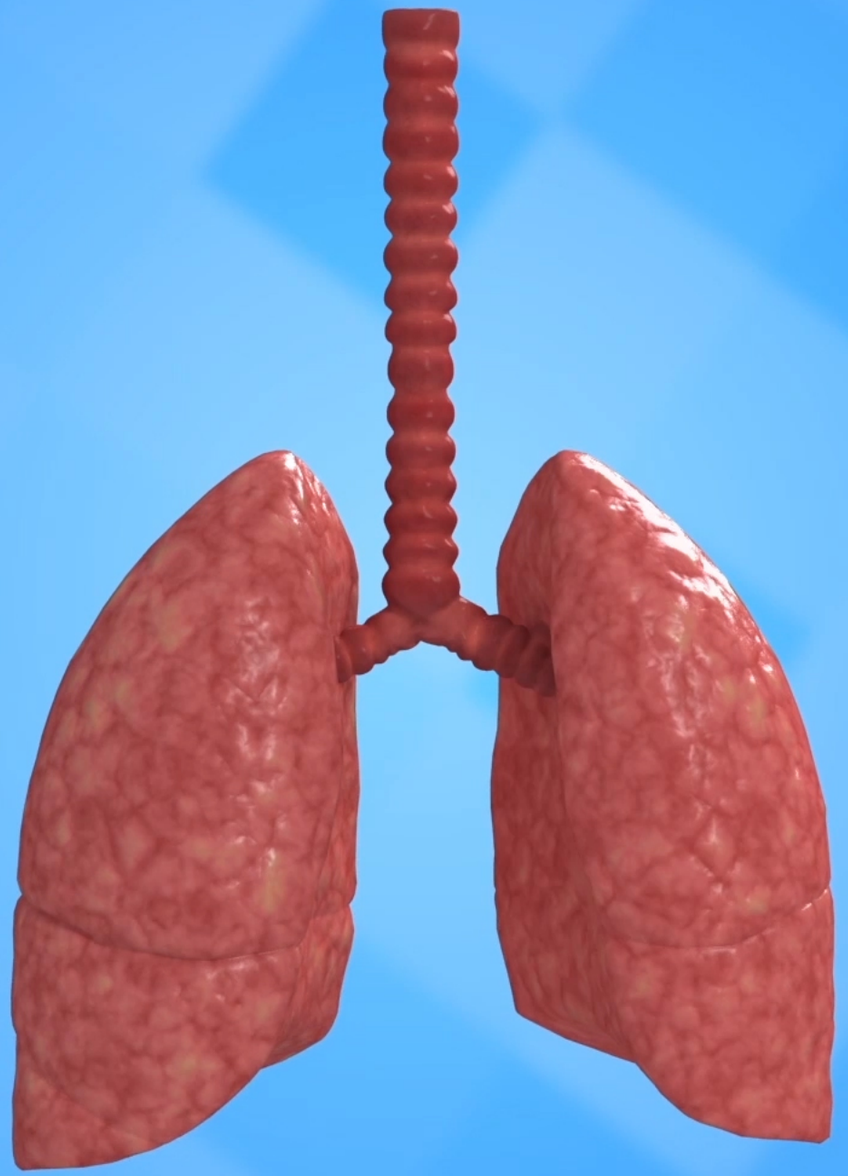

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Spirometry can be used to identify if you have a lung disease, determine the condition of your lung disease, and check if the medications you take for your lung disease are helping.

Ask your doctor to have a spirometry test if you are receiving treatment for a lung disease or have lung health concerns.

You should be concerned about your lung health if you have frequent coughing or shortness of breath, limiting your activities because of breathing, or you are over 40 years old and smoke or used to smoke.

Spirometry is a completely painless quick test

that can be done at a doctor’s office or clinic.

You may be asked not to use certain

inhalers or medications before the test.

Do not smoke for at least 6 hours before the test.

Avoid eating a large meal before your test.

Wear loose clothing

that won't interfere with your ability to take a deep breath.

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HEARTATTACK

EYE, CHEST, ABDOMINAL SURGERY

COLLAPSED LUNG

TUBERCULOSIS

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You should let your doctor know if you've had a recent heart attack, eye, chest, or abdominal surgery, if you have ever had a collapsed lung or if you have tuberculosis.

If you've had any of these, your doctor may wait until you recover before doing the testing.

A spirometer will be used for the spirometry test.

You need to follow the technician’s instructions exactly.

If you have dentures, you may be asked to remove them.

You will be asked to sit down comfortably with feet flat on the floor.

You will then raise your head and chin so that you can breathe easily.

Next, you will place a clip on your nose.

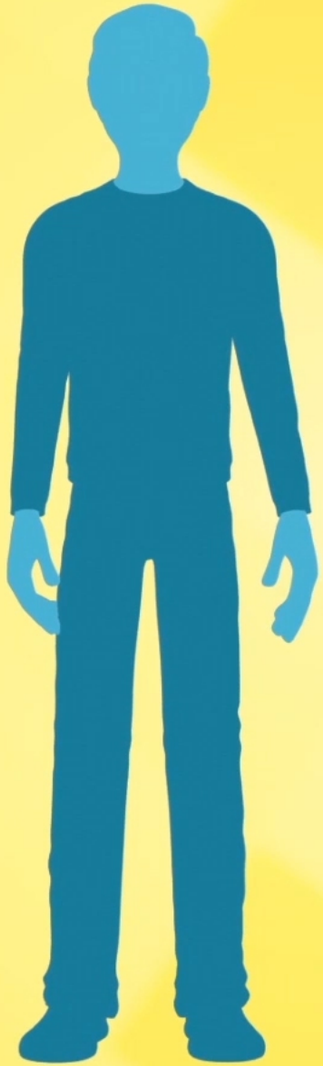
Then, you will place the mouthpiece between your teeth and tightly seal your lips around it.

You will take normal breaths first and then take the biggest breath possible and blow the air out as fast as you can.

You need to keep blowing until your lungs feel completely empty

at which time the technician will tell you to breathe normally.

It is important for you to give the maximum effort you can during the test.



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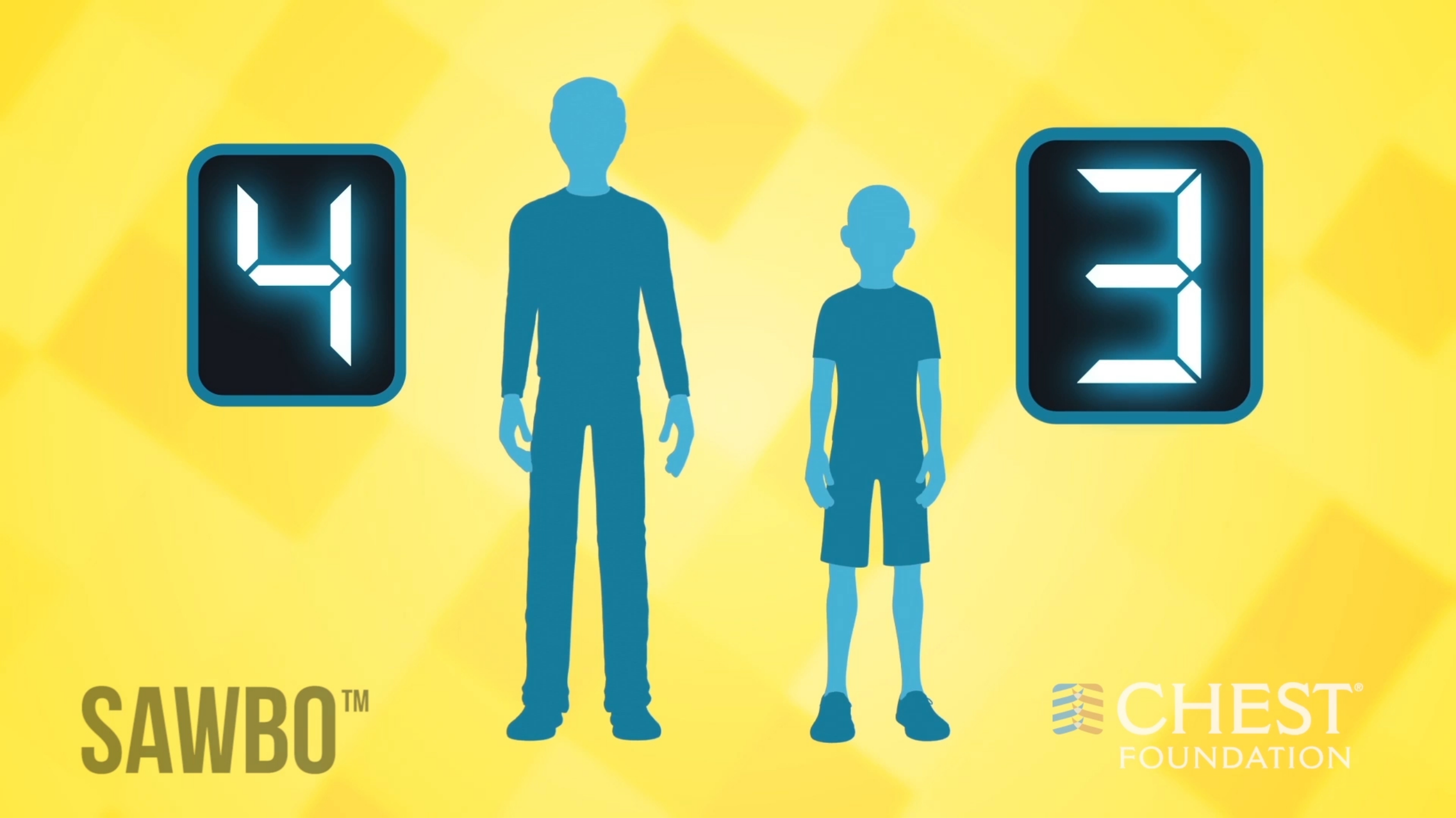
If you are an adult, you need to blow for at least 6 seconds;



a child needs to blow for at least 3 seconds.

The test is usually repeated three times to assure accuracy.

You may be asked to take an inhaled medication to open your lungs after the initial round of tests.

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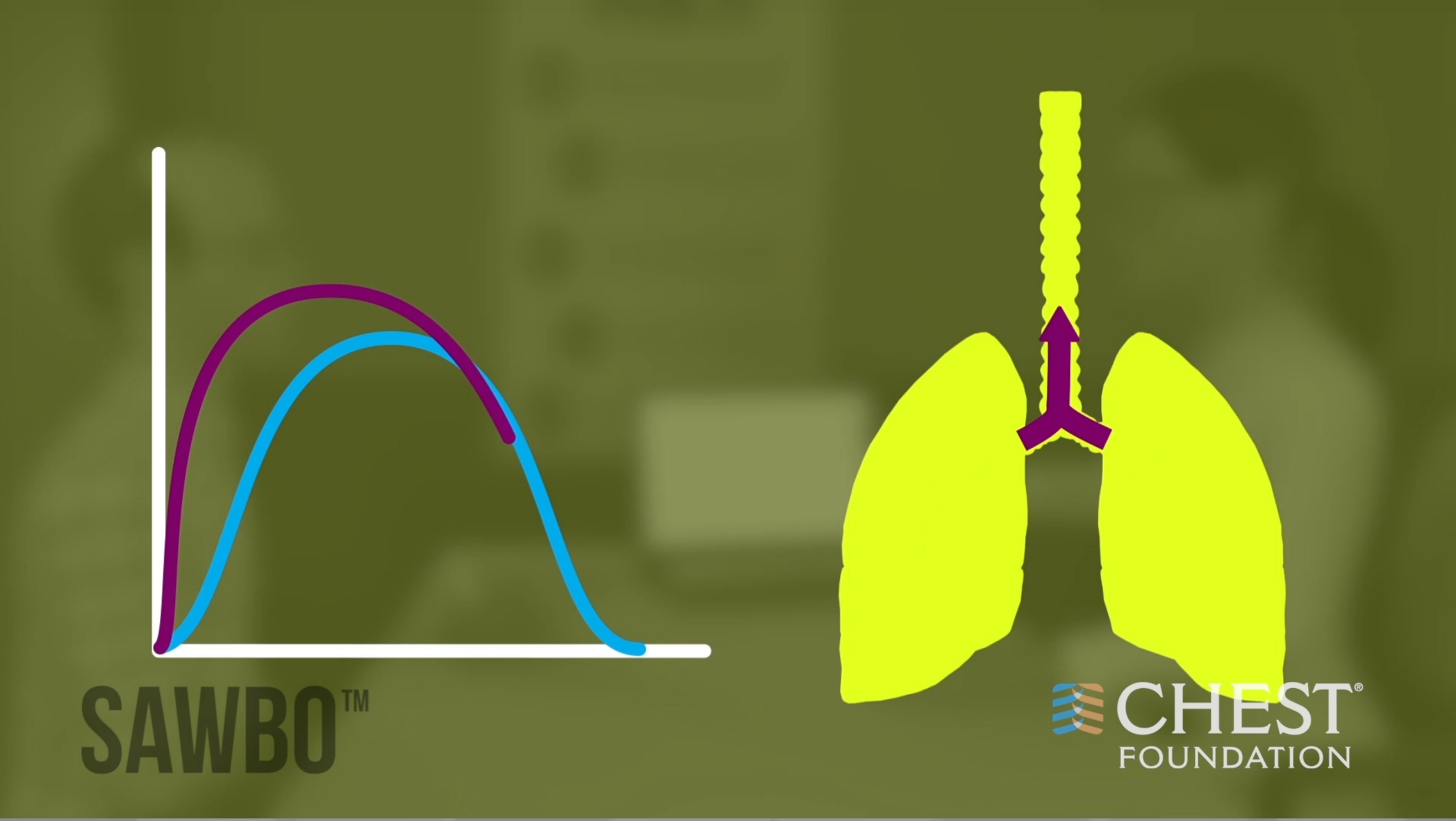
The test will then be repeated to see how your lungs respond to the medication.



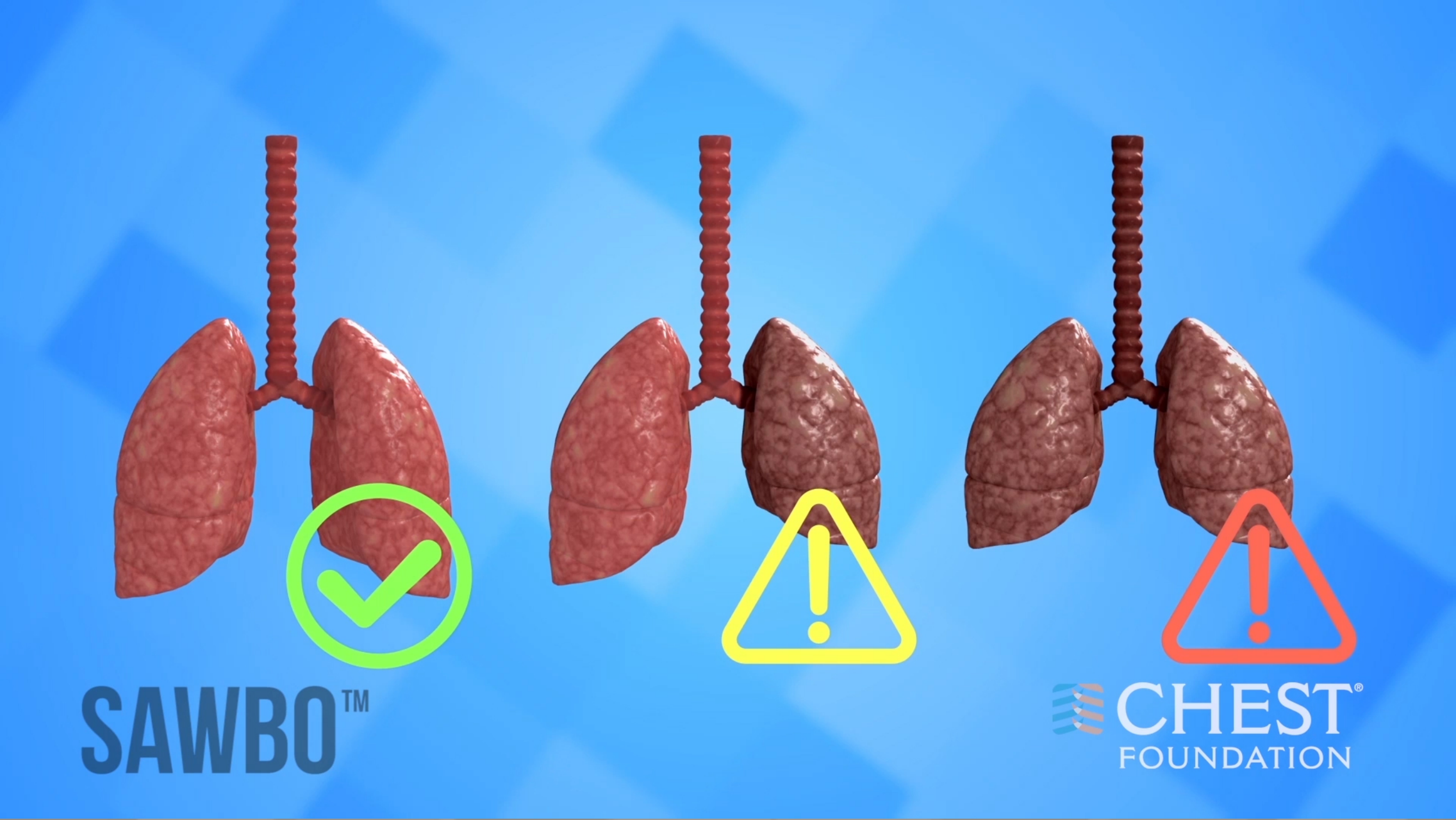
Spirometry generates numbers and charts that show you and your doctor the volume and flow of air coming in and out of the lungs as you breath in and out.

Breathing fast and hard for the spirometry test can make you feel tired, dizzy or light-headed, can make you cough, or have chest tightness or pain.

You should let the technician know if you have any discomfort.

Remember, spirometry is a quick and easy test

that helps your doctor understand your lung health
and helps you get any treatment you may need.



The earlier the test is done, the earlier lung diseases can be detected and treated.

Talk to your healthcare provider today to see if you should get a spirometry test.

SAWBO's Spirometry animation can be found at this link:

https://sawbo-animations.org/video.php?video=//www.youtube.com/embed/1-YpkHpk4oc

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