

VATS Lung Resection – Taking the pain out of lung cancer surgery.

Exciting advances in lung cancer surgery make it now possible to remove and cure lung cancer with surgical methods that radically reduce pain and lead to a return to normal function in days as opposed to weeks. VATS lobectomy (video assisted thoracoscopic lobectomy) makes use of sophisticated video equipment and instrumentation making surgery possible through very small incisions.

Traditional lung resection surgery requires an incision between the ribs, with spreading of the ribs wide enough to allow the surgeon's hands to enter the chest cavity. This incision is known to be one of the most painful operative approaches, and leaves a patient fairly debilitated for a period of several weeks. Complete return to unrestricted physical activity can take 3-4 months with some incisional discomfort lasting as long as a year.

VATS lobectomy is performed using a few tiny skin incisions for placement of special instruments and a video camera allowing the surgeon to perform all of the operative maneuvers from outside the chest wall and skin. One incision is made large enough to allow the removed specimen to be extracted from the chest cavity in a small plastic sac, but no rib spreading or retraction is required. Without retraction of the incision, the nerves traveling under each rib are not traumatized, so the resulting discomfort is minimized. Often, patients are able to leave the hospital within 24 or 48 hrs of the operation, requiring little or no medication for pain control.

VATS lobectomy is a major advance in Thoracic Surgery, providing a tremendous improvement in the way we care for our patients. With this new technology, traditional life saving cancer operations can be performed through miniature incisions leading to a marked reduction in pain, and near immediate return to normal function and activity.