

Surgery Techniques Produce Less Pain & Recovery Time

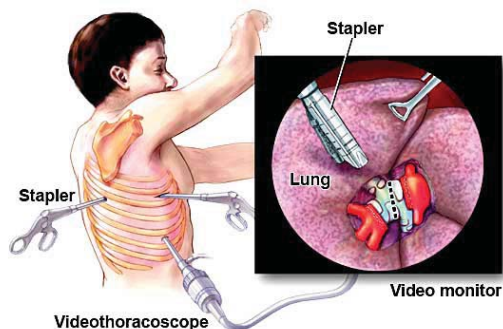
Ari Halldorsson, M.D.
Professor and Vice Chair
Division of Cardio-Thoracic Surgery
Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center

Minimally Invasive Chest Surgeries are at the
forefront of modern technology at TTUHSC

The surgical subspecialty of the chest or general thoracic surgery deals with surgical diseases of organs within the chest cavity other than the heart or great vessels. This includes the lungs, the lining around the lungs, the esophagus, and various structures in the area between the lungs called the mediastinum. Traditionally chest surgeries were performed using open methods. A large incision was made into the chest cavity, usually on the side, and the ribs were either removed or spread to gain access to perform the surgery.

Although we still have to resort to this method of classic open surgery in some instances specifically when dealing with dangerous diseases such as lung cancer, cancer of the esophagus or major trauma, smaller procedures can now be done using much less invasive methods significantly improving the patient's recovery time.

Currently thoracoscopic more than half of all surgical procedures in the chest cavity are performed using minimally invasive techniques often referred to as Video Assisted Thoracoscopic Surgery or VATS. With the patient under anesthesia a small incision, about



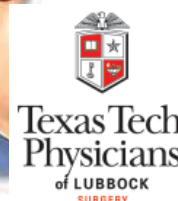
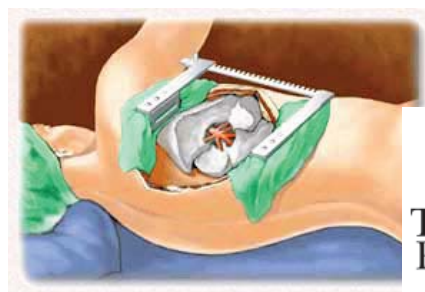
½ inch in length is made on the side of the chest and a camera is introduced into the chest cavity using videos from different angles the surgeon is able to visualize the whole chest cavity including the lung and the lining of the lung and many other structures. By using puncture incisions, usually 2 or 3 to introduce instruments the surgeon is able to perform various procedures including lung biopsy's, repairing puncture wounds of the lung, biopsy both the lung and lymph nodes and evacuate and treat fluid accumulation around the lung.

The patient wakes up in the operating room immediately after the surgery. Usually one or two tubes are placed through the holes already made for the surgery to empty the little bit of fluid and air that builds up after this type of surgery. The patient is able to eat normally and take a walk the same day of surgery. For most procedures performed this way the chest tubes are removed within two or three days and the patient may leave the hospital. Full recovery from the surgery is usually about one to two weeks and the patient is able to resume normal activity immediately after being discharged from the hospital. Although all of these estimates vary, depending on the patient's overall condition and the reason for the surgery, using minimally invasive chest procedure has significantly diminished post-operative pain and recovery time.

The future

Currently, larger academic medical centers, like Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center, perform at least half of their chest surgeries using minimally invasive video assisted techniques. **We are at the forefront of new technology in this area with access to state of the art equipment and technology.** These new techniques are not always appropriate and some patients are better served with the open procedures, for instances to fully remove large cancers. With these techniques we have seen dramatic improvement in the patient's outcome and this has enabled us to perform surgery on patients that previously were thought to be inoperable. In the future I expect that we will be able to

perform chest surgery
for diagnosis and cure
on more and
more
patients with
less and less
risk and
discomfort.



Please do not hesitate to contact the Department of Surgery Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery at the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center, 3601 4th Street | Lubbock, TX | (806) 743-2370, for further information on this new and expanding technology.