

Breathing tests: What is diffusion capacity (DLCO or KCO) of lungs?

Among many different aspects of breathing tests, diffusion capacity of lungs is an important test. Diffusion capacity of the lungs, also known as DLCO (diffusing capacity of the lungs for carbon monoxide), is a measure of how well oxygen and other gases are able to move from the lungs into the bloodstream.

It is an important test that is often used to diagnose and monitor various lung diseases, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), interstitial lung disease, and pulmonary hypertension.

During a DLCO test, you will be asked to breathe in a small amount of carbon monoxide (CO) gas, which is completely safe in the small quantities used for this test. You will then exhale the gas, and the machine will measure how much of it was absorbed by your lungs. This measurement is used to calculate your DLCO.

The results of a DLCO test are typically reported as a percentage of predicted normal, based on your age, gender, and height. A DLCO result that is lower than expected can be a sign of lung damage or disease, while a result that is higher than expected may indicate that you have a larger than average lung capacity.

It's important to note that while a DLCO test is a useful diagnostic tool, it is just one piece of the puzzle when it comes to evaluating lung health. Your physician will likely order other tests and exams, such as spirometry, chest X-rays, and CT scans, to get a complete picture of your lung function.

If you have any questions or concerns about your DLCO test or your lung health in general, be sure to discuss them with your pulmonologist or physician.

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