Diagram 2 –
Recommended treatment algorithm for a secondary spontaneous pneumothorax*
*based upon BTS guidelines 2003

Secondary Spontaneous Pneumothorax

All patients should be given supplemental oxygen

Breathless?

YES

Intercostal drain & admit

Pneumothorax >1cm

NO

Age >50 or >2cm

Aspirate ?successful

NO

YES

Admit, observe for 24 hours

Never discharge a patient from the ED with a diagnosis of a secondary pneumothorax. As a minimum, supplemental oxygen and a 24 hour observation period is recommended.