

patient to respiratory failure

2. Observation of respiratory failure

3. Measurement of ABGs, including pH

Nursing observation and judgment are vital to the recognition and early management of respiratory failure. Nurses must be able to assess a situation and initiate appropriate action within moments. Signs of respiratory failure are listed in [Box 21-18](#).

Box 21-18

Clinical Manifestations of Respiratory Failure

Cardinal Signs

Restlessness

Tachypnea

Tachycardia

Diaphoresis

Early but Less Obvious Signs

Mood changes, such as euphoria or depression

Headache

Altered depth and pattern of respirations

Hypertension

Exertional dyspnea

Anorexia

Increased cardiac output and renal output