



Home → Health Topics → Collapsed Lung

URL of this page: <https://medlineplus.gov/collapsedlung.html>

Collapsed Lung

A collapsed lung happens when air enters the pleural space, the area between the lung and the chest wall. If it is a total collapse, it is called pneumothorax. If only part of the lung is affected, it is called atelectasis.

Causes of a collapsed lung include:

- Lung diseases such as pneumonia or lung cancer
- Being on a breathing machine
- Surgery on the chest or abdomen
- A blocked airway

If only a small area of the lung is affected, you may not have symptoms. If a large area is affected, you may feel short of breath and have a rapid heart rate.

A chest x-ray can tell if you have it. Treatment depends on the underlying cause.

NIH: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

Start Here

- Atelectasis [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/atelectasis/symptoms-causes/syc-20369684?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
- Pneumothorax [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/pneumothorax/symptoms-causes/syc-20350367?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/pneumothorax/symptoms-causes/syc-20350367?p=1>]

Diagnosis and Tests

- Bronchoscopy and Bronchoalveolar Lavage (BAL) [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/bronchoscopy-and-bronchoalveolar-lavage-bal/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/broncoscopia-con-lavado-broncoalveolar/>]
- Shortness of Breath [<https://familydoctor.org/condition/shortness-of-breath/?adfree=true>] (American Academy of Family Physicians)
Also in Spanish [<https://es.familydoctor.org/condicion/falta-de-aire-es/?adfree=true>]
- Tests for Lung Disease [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/lung-tests>]  (National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/es/salud/pruebas-pulmonares>]

Treatments and Therapies

- Chest tube insertion - series [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100008_1.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/esp_presentations/100008_1.htm]
- Chest Tube Thoracostomy [<https://www.thoracic.org/patients/patient-resources/resources/chest-tube-thoracostomy.pdf>] (American Thoracic Society) - **PDF**

- Pneumothorax - series [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100150_1.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/esp_presentations/100150_1.htm]

Living With

- Pulmonary Rehabilitation: MedlinePlus Health Topic [<https://medlineplus.gov/pulmonaryrehabilitation.html>]
 (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pulmonaryrehabilitation.html>]

Related Issues

- What Is LAM (Lymphangioleiomyomatosis)? [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/lam>]
 (National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/es/salud/lam>]

Specifics

- What is a Spontaneous Pneumothorax? [<https://www.thoracic.org/patients/patient-resources/resources/spontaneous-pneumothorax.pdf>] (American Thoracic Society) - PDF

Clinical Trials

- ClinicalTrials.gov: Pneumothorax [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Pneumothorax%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]
 (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Pulmonary Atelectasis [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Pulmonary+Atelectasis%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]
 (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Thoracic CT findings and patient demographics associated with traumatic pneumothorax: recommendations... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40745562>]
- Article: Pneumothorax and Pneumomediastinum in SARS-CoV-2 Infection. [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40731812>]
- Article: Nodular Histiocytic/Mesothelial Hyperplasia - not such a rare phenomenon in children... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40679022>]
- Collapsed Lung -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Pulmonary+Atelectasis%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+OR+%22Pneumothorax%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bedat%5D+NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+>]

Reference Desk

- How the Lungs Work [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/lungs>]
  (National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/es/salud/pulmones>]

Find an Expert

- American Lung Association [<https://www.lung.org/>]
- Lung HelpLine [<https://www.lung.org/help-support/lung-helpline>] (American Lung Association)
- National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/>]


Patient Handouts

- Atelectasis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000065.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000065.htm>]

- Chest tube insertion [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002947.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/002947.htm>]
- Collapsed lung (pneumothorax) [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000087.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000087.htm>]
- Hemothorax [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000126.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000126.htm>]
- Lung surgery [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002956.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/002956.htm>]
- Pneumothorax - infants [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007312.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/007312.htm>]



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

- Atelectasis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000065.htm>]
- Chest tube insertion [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002947.htm>]
- Chest tube insertion - series [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100008_1.htm]
- Collapsed lung (pneumothorax) [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000087.htm>]
- Hemothorax [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000126.htm>]
- Lung surgery [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002956.htm>]
- Pneumothorax - infants [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007312.htm>]
- Pneumothorax - series [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100150_1.htm]

Related Health Topics

- Chest Injuries and Disorders [<https://medlineplus.gov/chestinjuriesanddisorders.html>]
- Lung Diseases [<https://medlineplus.gov/lungdiseases.html>]
- Pleural Disorders [<https://medlineplus.gov/pleuraldisorders.html>]

National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Collapsed Lung* is the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute [<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/>]

MedlinePlus links to health information from the National Institutes of Health and other federal government agencies.

MedlinePlus also links to health information from non-government Web sites. See our [disclaimer](#)

[<https://medlineplus.gov/disclaimers.html>] about external links and our [quality guidelines](#)

[<https://medlineplus.gov/criteria.html>] .

The information on this site should not be used as a substitute for professional medical care or advice. Contact a health care provider if you have questions about your health.

[Learn how to cite this page](#)

National Library of Medicine 8600 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD 20894 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services National Institutes of Health

Last updated June 12, 2025