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Breathing Problems

When you're short of breath, it's hard or uncomfortable for you to take in the oxygen your body needs. You may feel as if you're not getting enough air. Sometimes you can have mild breathing problems because of a stuffy nose or intense exercise. But shortness of breath can also be a sign of a serious disease.

Many conditions can make you feel short of breath:

- Lung conditions such as asthma [<https://medlineplus.gov/asthma.html>] , emphysema [<https://medlineplus.gov/emphysema.html>] , or pneumonia [<https://medlineplus.gov/pneumonia.html>]
- Problems with your trachea [<https://medlineplus.gov/trachealdisorders.html>] or bronchi [<https://medlineplus.gov/bronchialdisorders.html>] , which are part of your airway system
- Heart disease [<https://medlineplus.gov/heartdiseases.html>] can make you feel breathless if your heart cannot pump enough blood to supply oxygen to your body
- Anxiety [<https://medlineplus.gov/anxiety.html>] and panic attacks [<https://medlineplus.gov/panicdisorder.html>]
- Allergies [<https://medlineplus.gov/allergy.html>]

If you often have trouble breathing, it is important to find out the cause.

Start Here

- Breathlessness -- Shortness of Breath [<https://www.thoracic.org/patients/patient-resources/resources/breathlessness.pdf>] (American Thoracic Society) - **PDF**
- How Your Body Controls Breathing [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/lungs/body-controls-breathing>]  (National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/es/salud/pulmones/controles-respiratorios-del-cuerpo>]
- 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>]
- Shortness of Breath [<https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/10.1161/01.CIR.0000075956.36340.78>] (American Heart Association)
- Shortness of Breath [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/symptoms/shortness-of-breath/basics/definition/SYM-20050890?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/symptoms/shortness-of-breath/basics/definition/sym-20050890?p=1>]

Symptoms

- What Are Retractions? [<https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/retract.html>]  (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/kids/retract.html>]

Diagnosis and Tests

- Arterial Blood Gas (ABG) Test [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/blood-oxygen-level/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/prueba-de-gasometria-arterial/>]

- 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/>]
- Lung Function Tests [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/lung-function-tests/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/pruebas-de-funcion-pulmonar/>]
- Respiratory Pathogens Panel [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/respiratory-pathogens-panel/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/panel-de-patogenos-respiratorios/>]
- Shortness of Breath [<https://familydoctor.org/symptom/shortness-of-breath/?adfree=true>] (American Academy of Family Physicians)
Also in Spanish [<https://es.familydoctor.org/sintoma/dificultad-respiratoria/?adfree=true>]
- Spirometry [<https://www.lung.org/lung-health-diseases/lung-procedures-and-tests/spirometry>]  (American Lung Association)
- Spirometry [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/spirometry/about/pac-20385201?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/tests-procedures/spirometry/about/pac-20385201?p=1>]
- Sputum Culture [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/sputum-culture/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/cultivo-de-esputo/>]
- 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>]
- V/Q Scan [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/vq-scan/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Wheezing [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/symptoms/wheezing/basics/definition/SYM-20050764?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/symptoms/wheezing/basics/definition/SYM-20050764?p=1>]

Living With

- Minimizing Shortness of Breath [<https://www.nationaljewish.org/education/health-information/stress-and-relaxation/breathing-and-relaxation/minimizing-shortness-of-breath>] (National Jewish Health)
- Pulmonary Rehabilitation: MedlinePlus Health Topic [<https://medlineplus.gov/pulmonaryrehabilitation.html>] 
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pulmonaryrehabilitation.html>]
- Shortness of Breath and Eating [<https://www.nationaljewish.org/health-insights/healthy-eating/shortness-of-breath?modal=1>] (National Jewish Health)

Related Issues

- Dyspnea during Advanced Cancer [https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/treatment/side-effects cardiopulmonary-pdq#_143]  (National Cancer Institute)
Also in Spanish [https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/cancer/tratamiento/efectos-secundarios/cardiopulmonares-pdq#_143]
- Humidifiers: Ease Skin, Breathing Symptoms [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/common-cold/in-depth/humidifiers/ART-20048021?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
- Respirator Types and Use [<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/ppe/ respirators/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Thoracic Insufficiency Syndrome [<https://www.srs.org/Patients/Conditions/Scoliosis/Thoracic-Insufficiency-Syndrome-TIS>] (Scoliosis Research Society)

Specifics

- Hypoxemia (Low Blood Oxygen) [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/symptoms/hypoxemia/basics/definition/SYM-20050930?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/symptoms/hypoxemia/basics/definition/sym-20050930?p=1>]

- Obesity Hypoventilation Syndrome [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/obesity-hypoventilation-syndrome>] (National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute)

Also in Spanish [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/es/salud/sindrome-de-hipoventilacion-por-obesidad>]

Videos and Tutorials

- Breathing [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/anatomyvideos/000018.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/anatomyvideos/000018.htm>]
- Gas exchange [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/anatomyvideos/000059.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/anatomyvideos/000059.htm>]

Clinical Trials

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

Journal Articles

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

- Article: Breathlessness intensity recorded in general practice is associated with shorter times... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40738555>]
- Article: Increased breathlessness in post-COVID syndrome despite normal breathing patterns in a... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40730844>]
- Article: Non-invasive neuromodulation for alleviating dyspnoea: protocol for a feasibility sham-controlled randomised... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40701604>]
- Breathing Problems -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Dyspnea%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+OR+%22Tachypnea%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+>]

Find an Expert

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

Children

- Breath-Holding Spells [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/spells.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/spells.html>]
- Transient Tachypnea of the Newborn (TTN) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/ttn.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/ttn.html>]

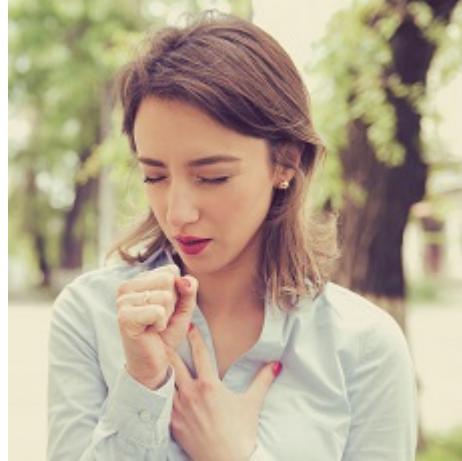
Older Adults

- Caregiver Guide: Breathing Problems [<https://www.healthinaging.org/tools-and-tips/caregiver-guide-breathing-problems>] (AGS Health in Aging Foundation)

Patient Handouts

- Blood gases [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003855.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003855.htm>]
- Breath sounds [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007535.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/007535.htm>]
- Breathing difficulty [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003075.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003075.htm>]

- Breathing difficulty - lying down [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003076.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003076.htm>]
- How to breathe when you are short of breath [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000053.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000053.htm>]
- Pulmonary function tests [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003853.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003853.htm>]
- Rapid shallow breathing [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007198.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/007198.htm>]
- Wheezing [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003070.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003070.htm>]



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

- Blood gases [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003855.htm>]
- Breath - holding spell [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000967.htm>]
- Breath sounds [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007535.htm>]
- Breathing [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/anatomyvideos/000018.htm>]
- Breathing - slowed or stopped [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003069.htm>]
- Breathing difficulties - first aid [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000007.htm>]
- Breathing difficulty [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003075.htm>]
- Breathing difficulty - lying down [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003076.htm>]
- Bronchiectasis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000144.htm>]
- Bronchoscopy [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003857.htm>]
- Chest CT [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003788.htm>]
- Gas exchange [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/anatomyvideos/000059.htm>]
- Home apnea monitor use - infants [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000755.htm>]
- How to breathe when you are short of breath [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000053.htm>]
- Hyperventilation [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003071.htm>]
- Intercostal retractions [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003322.htm>]
- Nasal flaring [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003055.htm>]
- Obesity hypoventilation syndrome (OHS) [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000085.htm>]

Palliative care - shortness of breath [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000471.htm>]

Primary alveolar hypoventilation [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000078.htm>]

Pulmonary function tests [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003853.htm>]

Rapid shallow breathing [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007198.htm>]

Stridor [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003074.htm>]

Tracheomalacia - acquired [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007310.htm>]

Tracheomalacia - congenital [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001084.htm>]

Transient tachypnea - newborn [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007233.htm>]

Traveling with breathing problems [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000066.htm>]

Turbinete surgery [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007563.htm>]

Wheezing [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003070.htm>]

Related Health Topics

Acute Bronchitis [<https://medlineplus.gov/acutebronchitis.html>]

Asthma [<https://medlineplus.gov/asthma.html>]

Bronchial Disorders [<https://medlineplus.gov/bronchialdisorders.html>]

Chronic Bronchitis [<https://medlineplus.gov/chronicbronchitis.html>]

COPD [<https://medlineplus.gov/copd.html>]

Heart Failure [<https://medlineplus.gov/heartfailure.html>]

Lung Diseases [<https://medlineplus.gov/lungdiseases.html>]

Sleep Apnea [<https://medlineplus.gov/sleepapnea.html>]

National Institutes of Health

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

Other Languages

Find health information in languages other than English [<https://medlineplus.gov/languages/breathingproblems.html>] on *Breathing Problems*

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