



Shortness of Breath



Overview

Sometimes you find yourself fighting for air. No matter how hard you try, you just can't seem to get enough. It's scary. It leaves you feeling worried and uneasy. How does this happen? Well, it's usually linked to a problem with your lungs or your heart.

Problems with the lungs

Let's take a look at the lungs first. If you have sudden shortness of breath from your lungs, it could be asthma or some sort of airway blockage. You could have pneumonia. If you've had an accident, you could have a broken rib or a collapsed lung. And, you could have a blood clot in a lung artery. That's a serious condition we call "pulmonary embolism." If your shortness of breath lasts for weeks or longer, you may have another lung issue. It could be linked to things like scarring, inflammation, fluid buildup or a tumor. Obesity may be a factor, too.

Problems with the heart

If your shortness of breath is linked to a heart problem, it could be a sign of heart failure or heart attack. You could have a problem with your heart muscle, or with your heart's rhythm. The tissue around your heart could be inflamed. And, you could have low blood pressure.

Conclusion

If you have severe shortness of breath that comes on suddenly, this is a medical emergency. Get help right away. For other types, see your doctor. With an examination, your doctor can find out what's wrong and create a care plan that's right for you.