

A Breath of Fresh Air: Navigating Common Lung Issues

Even when we are not thinking about it, our lungs are always working to keep us breathing. We may not notice this until we have a lung problem flair up, and breathing can feel more like a battle. There are many common lung issues that can impact how our lungs work:

1. **Asthma** is a long-term condition that causes a person's airway to swell, produce mucus, and/or tighten. This makes the airway narrow and difficult for the person to breathe.
2. **Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)** is a long-term combination of two or more lung diseases that cause a person's airway to become swollen and blocked. COPD can make daily activities harder due to shortness of breath.
3. **Pneumonia** is a lung infection that causes the air sacs in the lungs to form fluid and swell. If Pneumonia is left untreated, it can cause serious issues depending on the person's health status.



Many lung issues have similar symptoms such as coughing, wheezing, chest pain, shortness of breath, feeling tired or restless, and/or an increased heart rate. If you are experiencing symptoms, see a doctor to receive a treatment plan specific to your diagnosis. The earlier a disease is diagnosed the better the treatment options are. Before your doctor appointment, try to name your symptoms, consider how often you feel them and what you may have been doing before your symptom(s) started.

Some lung issues do not have a 'cure', but there are actions you can do to make them feel more under control:

- **Make your health a priority:** Visit your doctor once or twice a year to assess your lung health.
- **Notice triggers:** What were you doing before a breathing flair up? Avoid these triggers in the future.
- **Create an action plan:** Know your symptoms and when you need to seek emergency care.
- **Vaccinate:** Stay up to date on your vaccinations to protect yourself from getting other infections.

At times, lung disease is caused by factors outside of our control, but we can reduce our risk by acting on factors within our control. To help protect yourself from lung issues: (1) avoid smoking or breathing in second-hand smoke, (2) ensure there is no mould or asbestos in your house, (3) wear proper PPE when handling chemicals or dust, and (4) exercise regularly.

By managing lung issues as they come up, you can improve your quality of life and make simple daily tasks feel less tiring. Speak with your doctor if you start to notice any breathing symptoms. Remember, by taking care of your lungs, they will take care of you!

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