

Understanding Your Lung Health: PAH



Pulmonary arterial hypertension (PAH) is one form of a broader condition called pulmonary hypertension which is high blood pressure in the lungs.

What causes PAH?

PAH is caused when the tiny arteries in your lung become thickened and narrowed. This blocks the blood flow through your lungs, raising the blood pressure in the lungs and causing your heart to work harder to pump your blood through those narrowed arteries. The exact cause of PAH is unknown. Although there is no cure for PAH, early diagnosis, and treatment can improve your outcomes.

What are the symptoms of PAH?

Symptoms are usually not specific and may not be noticeable during the early stages of PAH. Over time, you may begin to experience symptoms common to other diseases including:

- Shortness of breath
- Fatigue
- Dizziness and fainting spells
- Chest pain
- Heart palpitations

Why is PAH misdiagnosed?

PAH is often misdiagnosed because the symptoms are similar to other, more common lung diseases. The most common misdiagnoses of PAH are chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and asthma. Other misdiagnoses include heart failure, bronchitis, pneumonia, lung fibrosis, and hypertension.

Because PAH is rare, it is important that you seek specialized care. A PAH specialist will use risk assessment tools to predict prognosis and determine the best course of treatment.

Questions to ask your doctor

Communicating with your healthcare team is vital to getting a treatment plan that is right for you. Here are some questions you can ask your doctor:

- How do we know if I have PAH?
- How severe is my PAH?
- How many pathways of PAH are we treating with my current PAH medications?
- What are the available treatment options for my PAH?
- Are there potential side effects associated with PAH treatments?
- What lifestyle changes can help manage my PAH?
- What symptoms should I look out for that indicate my condition might be worsening?
- Are there support groups or resources available for people with PAH?

Learn more at Lung.org/PAH



It is important to have support when living with a chronic lung disease. The Lung Helpline is staffed with respiratory professionals that can answer your lung health questions and help you find a support group for free at 1-800-LUNGUSA and press 2.