

# PULMONARY HYPERTENSION

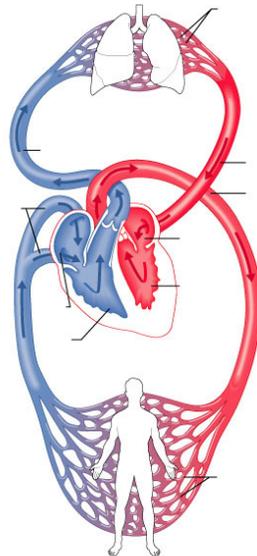


*I'm at risk.  
What now?*

## What is pulmonary hypertension?

*Pulmonary* hypertension (PH) is high blood pressure in your lungs. Like other parts of the body, your lungs have blood vessels. Narrowing of these blood vessels raises their pressure, just like when you cover a hose nozzle with your thumb. Over time, this can cause your heart to weaken, or even fail.

When most people say, “high blood pressure,” they are talking about *systemic* hypertension (SH). This is high blood pressure in your legs, arms, torso, and head. Your doctor can measure this type of blood pressure with an arm cuff. Unlike SH, an arm cuff cannot tell your doctor if you have PH, because the heart separates the blood in your arms from the blood in your lungs. **Knowing the signs of PH is very important if you are at risk.**



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## Why am I at risk?

Your doctor gave you this brochure because you have one or more of the risk factors of PH:

- Family history
- Certain heart, lung, liver, or connective tissue diseases

PH is more common in women than men.

## How can I lower my risk?

- Talk to your doctor before getting pregnant
- Limit time spent at high altitudes
- Avoid excess weight gain
- Do not use meth, cocaine, or diet pills

Notes from your doctor:

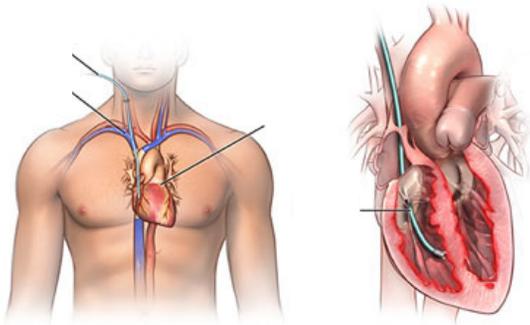
## What are the signs?

- Feeling out of shape
- Trouble breathing
- Fatigue
- Dizziness
- Swollen face, ankles, stomach, or feet
- Fingers that turn blue or white and hurt in the winter

Early signs are mild, but PH is a progressive disease. This means that it will get worse over time without treatment. **If you are at risk and have any of these signs, tell your doctor.**

## How is it diagnosed?

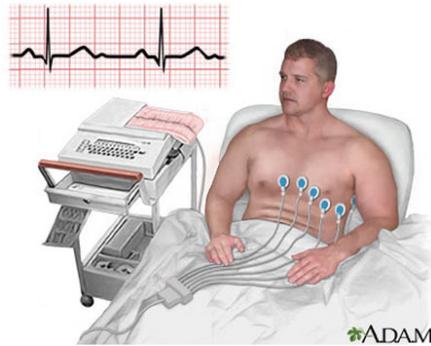
1. Catheterization: Your doctor can thread a small device through a vein and into your heart to measure pulmonary blood pressure.



2. Six-minute walk test: Your doctor can test how far you can walk in six minutes to see how strong your heart and lungs are. Weak heart and lungs can be caused by PH.

3. Chest X-ray: Your doctor can take a picture of your heart and pulmonary arteries to see if they are larger than normal. This is a sign that pulmonary blood pressure is too high.

4. EKG: Your doctor can measure the electrical activity of your heart to see how strong it is. A weak heart can be caused by PH.



5. Blood test: Your doctor can take a blood sample to check for molecules that your heart makes when it is failing. A failing heart can be caused by PH.

## How is it treated?

PH cannot be cured, but medicine can slow its progression and treat its symptoms. Not all medicines work for everyone. It may take several visits to your doctor before you find which medicine works best for you. Oxygen tanks can help if you have trouble breathing.

## How will it affect my life?

People with PH have good days and bad days. The main effect is that it is harder to exercise. If you have PH...

You should get:

- Flu vaccines
- A pneumonia vaccine

You should not:

- Smoke
- Take birth control pills
- Live at a high altitude

You should talk to your doctor before:

- Taking any medicine
- Getting pregnant

Notes from your doctor: