

Pneumothorax

Pneumothorax is an uncommon complication of CF, occurring most often in adults. A spontaneous pneumothorax occurs when air leaks into the space between the lungs and the chest cavity (called the pleural space). This air pushes on the lung and can lead to the partial or complete collapse of the lung.

What causes pneumothorax?

A pneumothorax can be caused by a blunt or penetrating chest injury, certain medical procedures, or damage from underlying lung disease. In CF, it is likely due to the latter. Presumably the pleural surface is weakened due to ongoing inflammation and infection.

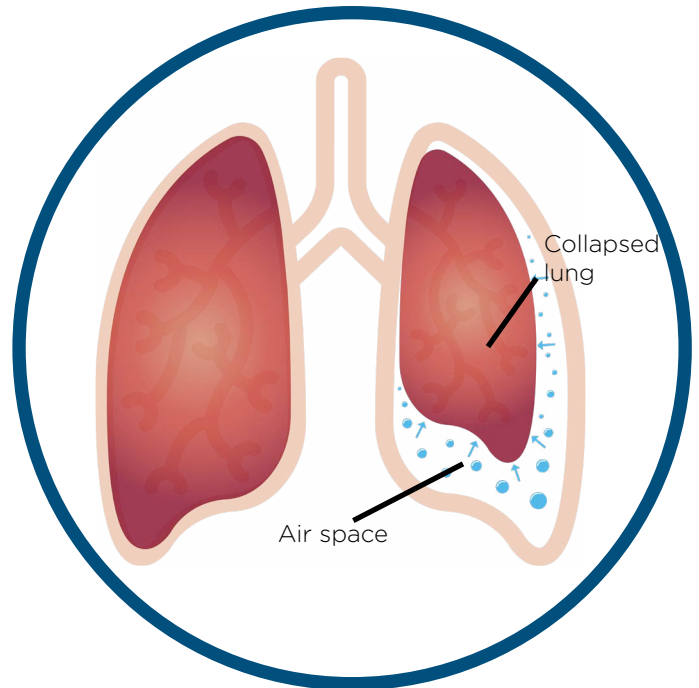
Pneumothorax occurs more frequently as people get older, in those with more advanced disease as well as those with organisms (usually bacteria/fungi) in their lungs that have become resistant to the antibiotics which are normally used.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms usually include sudden chest pain and shortness of breath. It is usually diagnosed with a chest x-ray, or sometimes ultrasound or CT scan may be used.

How is it treated?

Hospital admission is recommended, and treatment usually involves the insertion of a chest drainage tube between the ribs to remove the excess air. Sometimes ongoing air leaks and recurrent pneumothorax may require surgical intervention, as decided by the CF team.



Airway clearance and nebulisations should be continued, but may need to be modified and there may be some exercise and activity restrictions as advised by the physiotherapist.

Useful resources

- [Pneumothorax \(Health Direct\)](#)
- [CFWA Factsheets](#)

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