

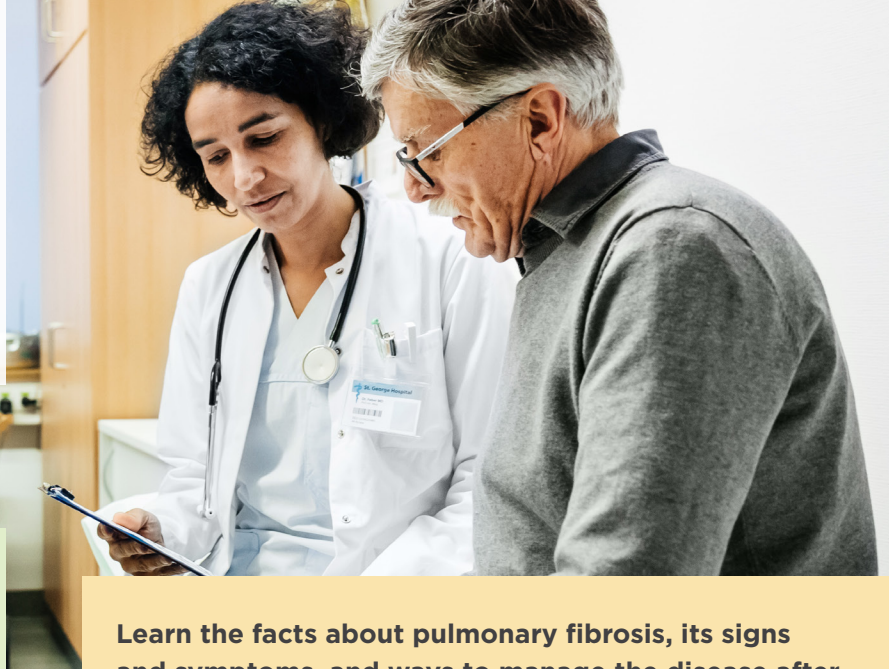
WHAT IS PULMONARY FIBROSIS?

Could You Have Pulmonary Fibrosis?

People with pulmonary fibrosis often experience these symptoms:

- **Shortness of breath that gets worse over time.** At first, it may be harder to breathe when you're active. As time passes, it may become hard to catch your breath even while you rest.
- **A dry cough that doesn't improve.** This could include repeated coughing attacks you can't control. As with shortness of breath, the cough may get worse as time goes by.
- **Achy joints and muscles.**
- **Feeling tired or weak.**
- **Losing weight slowly and without trying.**

If you have these symptoms, talk to your healthcare provider. Your doctor may ask you questions about your medical history and listen to your lungs. He or she may order tests, such as an X-ray or a CT scan, to help rule out other conditions.



Learn the facts about pulmonary fibrosis, its signs and symptoms, and ways to manage the disease after a diagnosis.

Basic Facts About Pulmonary Fibrosis

- **Pulmonary fibrosis occurs when the tissue in the lungs becomes thick and stiff.** Over time, scarring deep in the lungs can take place. This makes it harder to breathe in air and harder to get oxygen into the bloodstream. (The word “pulmonary” means having to do with the lungs. “Fibrosis” means scarring.)
- **Pulmonary fibrosis comes in different forms.** The most common type is called idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. (“Idiopathic” means that the cause of the disease is unknown.)
- **Some people are more likely to have pulmonary fibrosis.** Although the cause of the disease is not always known, factors such as gender and age can greatly affect who gets it. For example:



Men are more likely than women to have the disease.



The disease usually occurs in **people older than 50**.



People who smoke have a higher risk.



A person whose parent or sibling has the disease may be more likely to develop it, too.



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
National Institutes of Health



NIH Publication No. 22-HL-8177
January 2022

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WHAT IS PULMONARY FIBROSIS?

Managing Pulmonary Fibrosis

There is no cure yet for pulmonary fibrosis. But if you're diagnosed with the disease, you can take these steps to slow down its progress, improve your breathing, and live better:

- **Oxygen therapy** to make it easier to breathe—and easier to exercise.
- **Certain medicines** prescribed for your type of the disease.
- **Lung transplant surgery** in some more advanced cases of pulmonary fibrosis.
- **Pulmonary rehabilitation** to improve your strength and quality of life.
- **Healthy lifestyle changes**, like quitting smoking, getting exercise, and eating a healthy diet.
- **Counseling and support** to help with stress and anxiety.

Managing pulmonary fibrosis may also mean regular checkups with your healthcare provider. These doctor visits will help you understand ways to avoid making your symptoms worse, when to seek medical help, and how to improve your quality of life.

How Pulmonary Fibrosis Affects Breathing

Your lungs include small air sacs called alveoli. When lungs are healthy, oxygen easily passes through the walls of the air sacs, and on into the blood.

With pulmonary fibrosis, though, the tissue around the air sacs becomes stiff and thick. This can lead to permanent scarring in the lungs, which makes the walls even thicker. The thickened walls of the air sacs make it harder for oxygen to get through and pass into the bloodstream.

The top of this image shows what it looks like when oxygen (O_2) passes through the air sacs in healthy lungs. The bottom picture shows oxygen going through air sacs in lungs with pulmonary fibrosis.

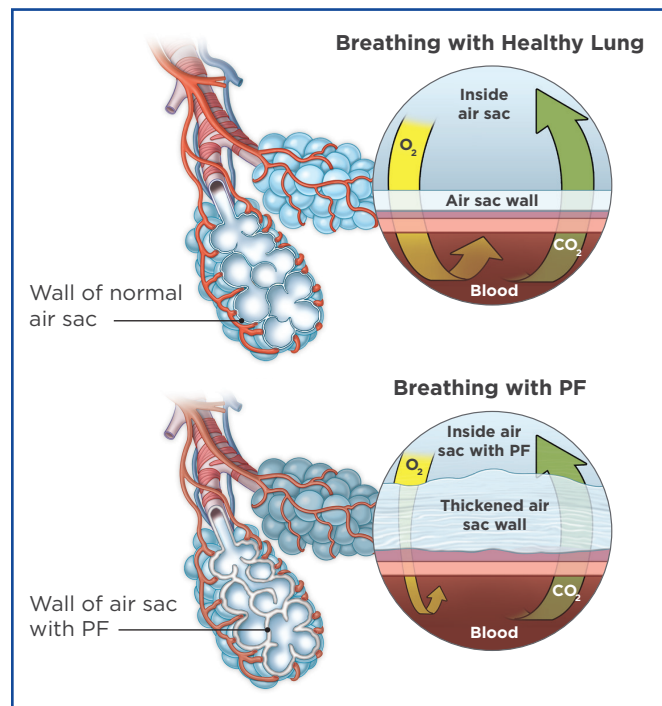


Image courtesy of Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation.

For more information about lung health, visit www.nhlbi.nih.gov/BreatheBetter.

For more information about pulmonary fibrosis, visit www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/idiopathic-pulmonary-fibrosis.