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PULMONARY EDEMA

What is pulmonary edema?

Pulmonary edema refers to the buildup of fluid in the lungs caused by back pressure in the lung veins.

What causes pulmonary edema?

Pulmonary edema occurs as a complication of several disorders of the heart, including heart attack, heart valve disease and other cardiac disorders. It can also occur as a result of exposure to high altitude. The condition develops as a result of fluid backup in the veins of the lungs. As pressure in these veins increases, fluid is forced out of the veins and into the air spaces of the lungs (called the alveoli). This affects the lungs' ability to exchange oxygen and carbon dioxide in the alveoli.

What are the symptoms of pulmonary edema?

- difficulty breathing
- wheezing, cough
- sweating
- pale skin
- anxiety
- restlessness

How is pulmonary edema diagnosed?

Your doctor will take your history and perform a physical exam, including listening to your lungs and heart with a stethoscope. Your doctor will listen for crackles in the lungs, as well as abnormal heart sounds.

Certain diagnostic tests and/or imaging procedures can help diagnose pulmonary edema. They include:

- chest X-ray
- echocardiogram
- CT scan
- MRI

How is pulmonary edema treated?

Pulmonary edema is a medical emergency. If you experience any of the above symptoms, contact your doctor immediately. Pulmonary edema patients receive oxygen through a mask, or through an endotracheal tube (a tube placed in your windpipe) and ventilation device.

Treatment of the disease and prevention of further incidents of pulmonary edema

involve addressing the underlying conditions causing the edema.

Medications are often used to treat pulmonary edema. They include diuretics to remove fluid, morphine to relieve congestion and anxiety, and cardiac drugs to address the underlying cardiac problems.