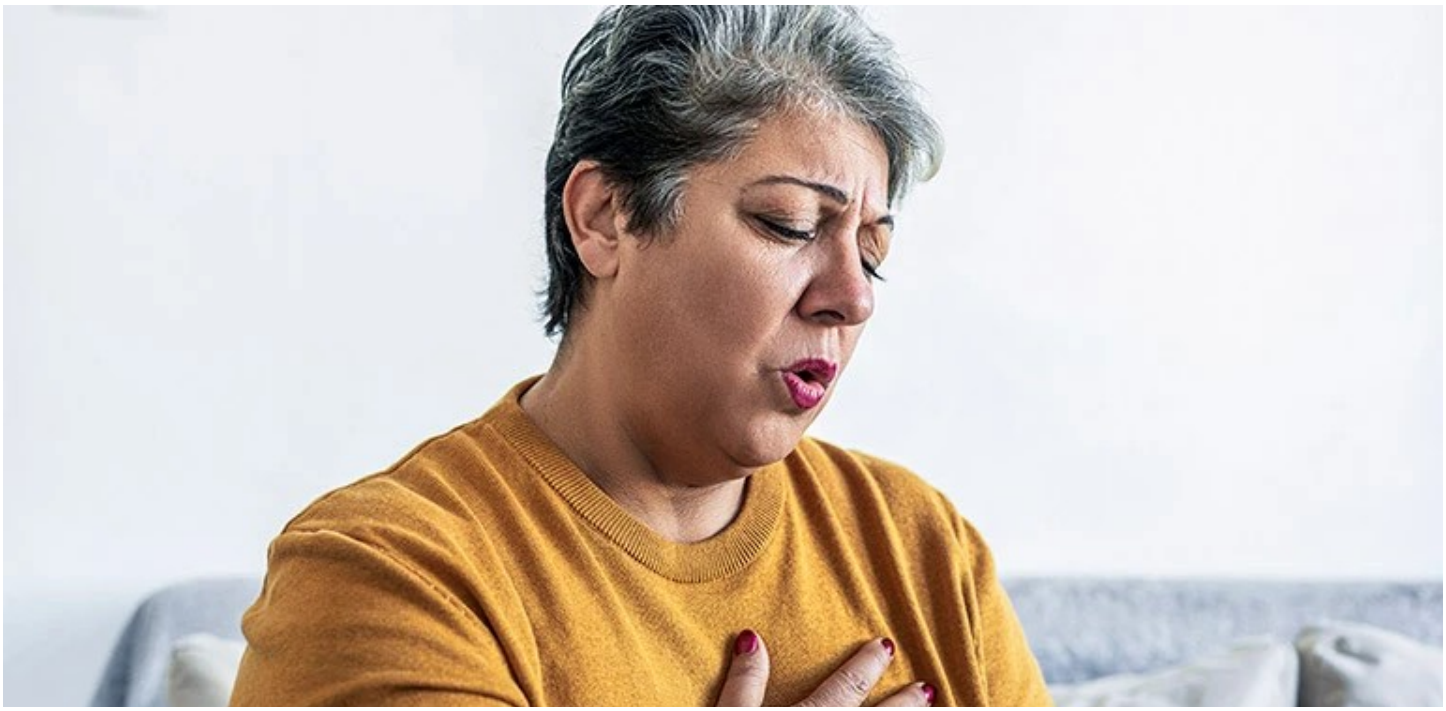
Warning Signs of Lung Disease

A nagging cough or slight wheeze may barely register in the course of our busy days, but it's critically important to pay attention to even mild symptoms.



Sometimes people think having trouble breathing is just something that comes with getting older (https://lung.org/lung-health-diseases/how-lungs-work/lung-capacity-and-aging). It is important to pay attention to these symptoms as they could be the first signs of lung disease, including COPD, asthma and lung cancer. Knowing the early warning signs of lung disease can help you receive treatment before the disease becomes serious or even life threatening. If you experience any of the following warning signs, make an appointment with your healthcare provider as soon as possible. Early detection could save your life.

Warning Signs

Chronic cough: A cough (https://lung.org/lung-health-diseases/lung-disease-lookup/cough) that you have had for eight weeks or longer is considered chronic. This is an important early symptom that tells you something is wrong with your respiratory system.

Shortness of breath: It's not normal to experience shortness of breath (https://lung.org/lung-health-diseases/lung-disease-lookup/shortness-of-breath) that doesn't go away after exercising, or that you have after little or no exertion. Labored or difficult breathing—the

feeling that it is hard to breathe in out—is also a warning sign.

Chronic mucus production: Mucus (https://lung.org/lung-health-diseases/warning-signs-of-lung-disease/mucus), also called sputum or phlegm, is produced by the airways as a defense against infections or irritants. If your mucus production has lasted a month or longer, this could indicate lung disease.

Wheezing: Noisy breathing or wheezing is a sign that something unusual is blocking your lungs' airways or making them too narrow.

Coughing up blood: If you are coughing up blood, it may be coming from your lungs or upper respiratory tract. Wherever it's coming from, it signals a health problem.

Chronic chest pain: Unexplained chest pain that lasts for a month or more—especially if it gets worse when you breathe in or cough—also is a warning sign.



Lung Nodules (Pulmonary Nodules)

Lung nodules, also called pulmonary nodules, may be an indicator of lung disease. Learn more about how nodules are found and treated.

Talking to Your Doctor

Prepare for a visit to your healthcare provider by following these steps:

1. Take a copy of your medical records with you. Or, see if your previous healthcare provider can send a copy. If you are unable to obtain your medical records, you can also write a short note about your health problems, when they occurred and the healthcare provider(s) that took care of you.
2. Make a list of all the medicines that you are using now. This means prescribed and over-the-counter medicines, as well as herbs and supplements and any non-traditional methods you use to treat your condition.
3. Make a list of all the healthcare providers you see and why you see them.

4. Make a list of the symptoms you are having and note which ones bother you the most. Write down when they started and what you have done (if anything) to make them better.

Resources

- Warning Signs of Lung Disease (https://lung.org/getmedia/7a41c9f9-d5f9-45ae-966a-9cbc076c9d53/ALA-Early-Warning-Signs-One-Pager-2021-(4).pdf) (PDF)
- Getting Ready for Your Office Visit (https://lung.org/getmedia/0ebd4c56-2118-4b23-83a7-0d03c6d1c564/getting-ready-for-your-next-office-visit-2020-(2).pdf) (PDF)
- Is Your Work Making It Harder to Breathe? It's Time to Get Referred to a Specialist. (https://lung.org/getmedia/eb631a92-83c0-444a-8e3b-e2a0c75243d9/Is-Your-Work-Making-It-Harder-to-Breathe_Its-Time-to-Get-Referred-to-a-Specialist.pdf)(PDF)



Questions about Lung Health?

Call our Lung HelpLine. Get free counseling with our registered nurses, respiratory therapists and quit smoking specialists; 1-800-LUNGUSA (586-4872).

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