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## **“SOB” Shortness of Breath**

Having shortness of breath can be quite frightening, especially if you have never experienced it before. People describe it in different ways: some people say they feel “hungry for air” others say that they “can’t breathe deeply enough.” Either way, it can be a very uncomfortable feeling. It can be caused by many different things and its specific cause requires careful evaluation and specific diagnostic testing. Fortunately, once the cause is figured out, there are many options for treatment.

Shortness of breath can be due to problems with the lungs, heart or other causes.

Common lung problems leading to shortness of breath include asthma (which often causes wheezing) and COPD aka chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (a lung condition that often affects current or former smokers). Or it could be due to infections such as pneumonia (occurring with other symptoms, such as fever and cough), severe allergic reactions aka anaphylaxis (occurring with itching, swelling or rash), blood clots or other blockage in an artery in the lungs also known as pulmonary embolism or a collapsed lung also known as pneumothorax.

Shortness of breath of cardiac origin could be due to blockages in blood flow to the heart muscle, which might happen during a heart attack. When a heart attack is occurring, there are often other symptoms, such as pain or pressure in the chest. Also a condition known as heart failure which decreases the heart's ability to pump blood throughout the body can also cause you to feel shortness of breath.

Other common cause of shortness of breath include; “deconditioning” which is the technical term for being out of shape. For example, if you do not exercise regularly, you may develop shortness of breath when climbing stairs. Obesity can also cause shortness of breath due to the extra weight pressing on the lungs.

Here at Heart and Health we take your concerns of shortness of breath very seriously. We will diagnose the cause of your shortness of breath by doing one or more of the following tests; EKG, blood tests, echocardiogram, stress tests and pulmonary function tests.

Remember, if you develop sudden shortness of breath or have chest pain and nausea, you must be taken to the nearest emergency department. Shortness of breath should never be taken lightly, and should always receive the appropriate medical evaluation.

### **Reference: UpToDate.com**

[http://www.uptodate.com/contents/patient-information-shortness-of-breath-dyspnea?source=search\\_result&selectedTitle=7%7E150](http://www.uptodate.com/contents/patient-information-shortness-of-breath-dyspnea?source=search_result&selectedTitle=7%7E150)