

Get the facts about PAH

Pulmonary arterial hypertension (PAH) is one type of high blood pressure. It is in the arteries that go from your heart to your lungs.

MYTHS BUSTED

PAH is a unique disease

FACT: PAH is a form of pulmonary hypertension. It is high blood pressure in the lungs. PAH is caused by a narrowing of the small blood vessels that go to the lungs. When they become too narrow or blocked, the part of the heart that pumps blood has to work harder. That puts a strain on the heart. Identifying the cause of PAH is important. The best treatment depends on an accurate diagnosis.



PAH and pulmonary hypertension are the same thing

FACT: Pulmonary hypertension is a general term. It is high pressure in the blood vessels in the lungs. Five disease categories are associated with pulmonary hypertension (each has a different cause or symptom). PAH is one of them. It generally refers to a narrowing and scarring of the small blood vessels that go to the lungs.

An echocardiogram is the best way to diagnose PAH

FACT: An echocardiogram is a non-invasive ultrasound of the heart. It can be used to look for pulmonary hypertension. But, it is not a test that can confirm PAH.

A right-sided heart catheterization test is needed. It ensures that the form of pulmonary hypertension is PAH. This procedure is preferred. Your doctor can directly measure the pressure in the pulmonary artery.

There is no treatment for PAH

FACT: It is usually not curable. But, there are several medications that effectively treat it. Choice of medicines is based on the:

- Patient
- Severity
- Cause

I have no control over my disease

FACT: PAH tends to get worse over time. However, you may be able to slow its progress by:

- Taking the right medications
- Having a healthy lifestyle
- Exercising
- Stopping smoking



Learn more by going to chestfoundation.org/pah

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There are no types of pulmonary hypertension that can be cured.

If I'm taking medications, I don't have to worry about my diet.

My doctor said that I have PAH. I don't need more tests.

I should not exercise if I have PAH.

I should just get a lung transplant.

FACT: Most forms of pulmonary hypertension are treatable—not curable. But, some categories can be cured. A liver transplant can sometimes cure PAH caused by liver disease. Other types of PAH are treatable but not curable. Chronic Thromboembolic Pulmonary Hypertension (CTEPH) is the curable form of Pulmonary Hypertension.

FACT: Medications can make a big difference. It is still important to follow a healthy diet that:

- Limits meat and fats
- Contains lots of fruits, grains, and vegetables
- Reduces salt and avoids extra salt.

This can help prevent water retention and swelling. Salt is hidden in foods—especially premade foods (like fast foods) and canned goods. Be aware of how much salt is in what you eat and drink.



FACT: PAH has many causes. It is crucial to get tested. This will help doctors:

- Uncover the exact disease type you have
- Determine which type of pulmonary hypertension you have
- Decide which medication or combination of medications is best for you
- Monitor how well you're responding to treatment

FACT: Exercise helps keep your body strong and healthy. For people with PAH, doctors typically recommend a supervised cardiac or pulmonary rehabilitation program. It should be carefully designed and supervised by a trained professional. It shouldn't tax your breathing. It should allow you to get stronger. Your doctor may suggest daily exercise. He or she can help you pick specific exercises and set the level of intensity.



FACT: Lung transplants are not done as often today as in years past, because medications are now available that are more effective. Some people with very severe disease—despite medications—may benefit from lung transplantation. This should be a last resort. A lung transplant can cure some extreme forms of pulmonary hypertension. But, it comes with its own significant risks and challenges. In general, people who respond well to treatment for PAH will not likely need a transplant. For people who don't respond well or whose condition declines over time, talk with your doctor about a lung transplant.