

Wellness Articles

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If you would like to be added to the distribution list for these articles, please email: Rebecca.johnson2@albertahealthservices.ca. You will receive a monthly email containing articles for the upcoming four weeks.

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Learning more about pulmonary hypertension

World Pulmonary Hypertension Day was May 5.

Pulmonary hypertension is high blood pressure in the arteries of your lungs. It may also be called pulmonary arterial hypertension (PAH).

These arteries carry blood from the heart to the lungs, where the blood picks up oxygen. The walls of the arteries may get thick, which narrows the space inside the arteries. When this happens, blood does not flow as well as it should. Pressure builds up in the arteries. Then your heart has to work harder to pump blood through your lungs.

Pulmonary hypertension may cause heart failure. Heart failure means that your heart doesn't pump as much blood as your body needs. It can happen to anyone at any age, even to young children.

It can be stressful to learn that you have a problem with your lungs and heart. But there are things you can do to feel better and stay as active as you can.

What are the symptoms?

At first, you may not notice any problems. But in time, you may have symptoms such as:

- Shortness of breath.
- Feeling tired, faint, or dizzy.
- Swelling (edema) in your legs, ankles, feet, and belly.
- Chest pain.

If you have pulmonary hypertension, stay as healthy as you can:

- Try to avoid colds and flu.
 - Get a pneumococcal vaccine shot. If you have had one before, ask your doctor if you need another dose.
 - Get the flu vaccine every year.
 - If you must be around people with colds or flu, wash your hands often.
- Eat healthy foods, and try to stay at a healthy weight. Healthy foods can help you have the energy you need.
- Do not smoke. Smoking can make this condition worse. If you need help quitting, talk to your doctor about stop-smoking programs and medicines. These can increase your chances of quitting for good.
- If you're a woman of child-bearing age, talk to your doctor about preventing pregnancy. Pregnancy and childbirth can cause changes in the body that could be life-threatening for women who have this condition.