

DYSPNEA OR RESPIRATORY DISTRESS

Target Population: Adult

Dyspnea or Respiratory Distress		
Potential Cause	Signs and Symptoms	Risk Factors
Acute Bronchitis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> breath sounds may have rhonchi that clear with cough cough lasting weeks gradual onset pleuritic chest pain sputum production tachypnea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recent upper respiratory tract infection smoking history
Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> acute shortness of breath hypoxia increased work of breathing sudden and progressive onset tachypnea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> drug overdose lung injury or recent multiple trauma obesity pancreatitis radiation therapy recent blood transfusion recent lung or systemic infection sepsis
Anxiety Disorder Panic Disorder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> gradual or sudden onset hyperventilation light-headed numbness and tingling in extremities restless worried 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> personal or family history of anxiety or depression recent traumatic experience stress
Asthma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> breath sounds diminished or with wheezing chest tightness cough gradual or sudden onset increased work of breathing peak flow rate less than predicted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> family history greater than 40 years of age history of frequent lung problems smoking
Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> accessory muscle use barrel chest breath sounds wheezing or diminished fatigue gradual or sudden onset oxygen saturation decreased prolonged expiratory phase sputum production tachypnea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> prolonged exposure to environmental irritant (smoke or chemical) prolonged smoking history
Heart Failure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> breath sounds with crackles or wheezing BNP (B-type natriuretic peptide) increased dyspnea on exertion gradual or sudden onset heart wall function decreased on echocardiogram orthopnea peripheral edema pulmonary edema on chest x-ray weight gain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> age cardiac disease diabetes hypertension obesity sedentary lifestyle smoking history
Myocardial Infarction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cardiac enzymes increased chest pain sudden onset symptoms not relieved with rest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cardiac disease diabetes hyperlipidemia hypertension smoking history

Potential Cause	Signs and Symptoms	Risk Factors
Neuromuscular Disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> extreme fatigue gradual or sudden onset lack of coordination muscle weakness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guillain-Barre myasthenia gravis myopathy spinal cord injury
Pleural Effusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> breath sounds over affected area diminished gas exchange impaired gradual onset 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cancer recent lung infection recent surgery
Pneumonia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> chest pain chills cough CRP (C-reactive protein) increased fatigue fever gradual onset infiltrate on chest x-ray loss of appetite 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> alcohol dependence difficulty swallowing gastroesophageal reflux immunosuppression or chronic disease recent exposure to illness smoking
Pneumothorax	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> absence of chest wall movement accessory muscle use breath sounds diminished or absent oxygen saturation decreased tachycardia tachypnea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> chest wall trauma pregnancy smoking history underlying lung disease
Pulmonary Embolism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> chest pain D-dimer increased oxygen saturation decreased sudden onset unilateral leg swelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> oral hormone use recent surgery or immobilization venous thromboembolism history