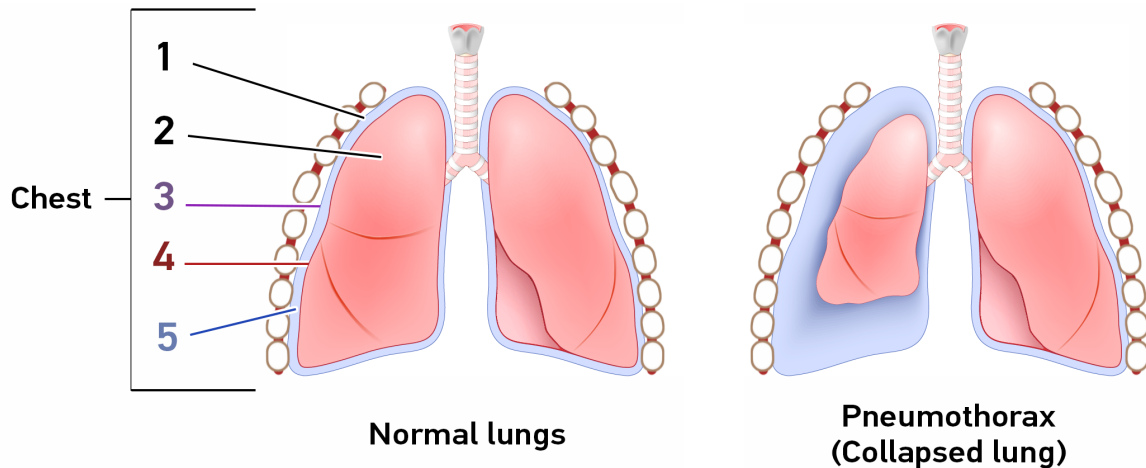


# What is a pneumothorax?

Lungs are covered by a thin layer of tissue called the pleura. The underside of the chest wall and ribs is also covered by pleura. The space between the two pleura is called the pleural space. The pleura slide against each other when you breathe. A pneumothorax happens when air gets in the pleural space, causing your lung to collapse.



1. Ribs
2. Lung
3. Pleura (outside layer)
4. Pleura (inside layer)
5. Space between pleura (Pleural space)

A pneumothorax can be caused by:

- No apparent reason, usually in young and healthy adults
- A lung disease
- An accident, for example a car accident or an injury
- An operation or a biopsy
- Smoking

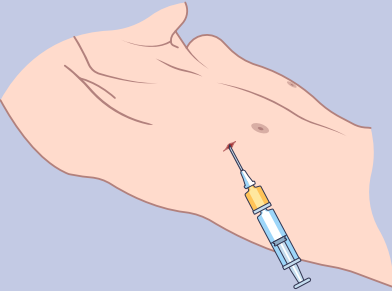
## What are the symptoms of a pneumothorax?

- Sudden, sharp chest pain that is worse when taking a deep breath
- Shortness of breath

## How do I know I have a pneumothorax?

A pneumothorax is diagnosed with a chest X-ray or a lung ultrasound.

## How is a pneumothorax treated?

If your pneumothorax is small and/or if your symptoms are mild	If your pneumothorax is larger and/or your symptoms are severe
<p>Your doctor might observe your condition and give you instructions.</p> <p>Pneumothorax often does not require any treatment and gets better on its own, with activity restrictions and pain management.</p>	<p>Your doctor might remove the air from the pleural space:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• By inserting a needle and aspirating the air</li><li>• By inserting a drain in the pleural space</li></ul>  <p><i>Needle or drain insertion</i></p>

## What are the activity restrictions after a pneumothorax?

- ✗ Avoid contact sports and intense physical activities until the pneumothorax is healed
- ✗ Avoid remote areas until the pneumothorax is healed
- ✗ Avoid air travel for at least 7 days after your doctor confirms that the pneumothorax is healed with a chest X-ray
- ✗ Stop scuba diving forever except in certain cases. Speak with your doctor
- ✓ Restart work and light activities (walking outside) when you feel good enough

## How to avoid having another pneumothorax

About 1/3 of people who have had a pneumothorax will have another one. And if you get a second pneumothorax, the chances of having a third one are even higher. The risk of having another pneumothorax is highest during the first year after the initial pneumothorax.

- Smoking increases the risk of having another pneumothorax. If you smoke or vape, stopping can lower your risk of getting another pneumothorax. Your healthcare provider can help you quit.  
You can find help online here: [www.tobaccofreequebec.ca/iqitnow](http://www.tobaccofreequebec.ca/iqitnow)
- Surgical pleurodesis is a procedure to get rid of the space between your lung and your chest wall (pleural space) to prevent a lung collapse. This can reduce the risk of having another pneumothorax. Talk to your doctor to find out about the benefits and risks of this procedure.

## When to go to the emergency?

Go to the nearest emergency room or call 9-1-1 if you have:

- Sudden, sharp chest pain
- Trouble breathing and it is getting worse

