

Summary: Recognizing Respiratory Problems

This section summarizes the recognition and identification of respiratory problems. This summary does not include all respiratory emergencies but instead provides key characteristics for a limited number of diseases.

Upper Airway Obstruction

- Airway: patent airway open and maintainable/not maintainable
- Breathing:
 - Respiratory rate/effort increased
 - Breath sounds:
 - Stridor (typically inspiratory)
 - Barking cough
 - Hoarseness
 - Change in pitch or cry
 - Decreased air movement
- Circulation:
 - Heart rate: tachycardia (early); bradycardia (late)
 - Skin: pallor, cool skin (early); cyanosis (late)
- Disability: level of consciousness: anxiety, agitation (early); lethargy, unresponsiveness (late)
- Exposure: variable temperature

Lower Airway Obstruction

- Airway: patent airway open and maintainable/not maintainable
- Breathing:
 - Respiratory rate/effort increased
 - Breath sounds:
 - Wheezing (typically expiratory)
 - Prolonged expiratory phase
 - Decreased air movement
- Circulation:
 - Heart rate: tachycardia (early); bradycardia (late)
 - Skin: pallor, cool skin (early); cyanosis (late)
- Disability: level of consciousness: anxiety, agitation (early); lethargy, unresponsiveness (late)
- Exposure: variable temperature

Lung Tissue Disease

- Airway: patent airway open and maintainable/not maintainable
- Breathing:
 - Respiratory rate/effort increased
 - Breath sounds:
 - Grunting
 - Crackles
 - Decreased breath sounds
 - Decreased air movement
- Circulation:
 - Heart rate: tachycardia (early); bradycardia (late)
 - Skin: pallor, cool skin (early); cyanosis (late)
- Disability: level of consciousness: anxiety, agitation (early); lethargy, unresponsiveness (late)
- Exposure: variable temperature

Disordered Control of Breathing

- Airway: patent airway open and maintainable/not maintainable
- Breathing:
 - Variable respiratory rate/effort
 - Normal breath sounds
 - Variable air movement
- Circulation:
 - Heart rate: tachycardia (early); bradycardia (late)
 - Skin: pallor, cool skin (early); cyanosis (late)
- Disability: level of consciousness: anxiety, agitation (early); lethargy, unresponsiveness (late)
- Exposure: variable temperature