

About Pulmonary Fibrosis

What is pulmonary fibrosis? Pulmonary fibrosis (PF) means scarring in the lungs. Over time, the scar tissue can destroy the normal lung and make it hard for oxygen to pass through the walls of the air sacs into the bloodstream. PF is not just one disease—it is a group of more than 200 different lung diseases that all look very much alike.

What causes pulmonary fibrosis? Some known causes of PF include autoimmune diseases, such as rheumatoid arthritis and scleroderma, environmental exposures, such as some molds or birds, and certain medications. Radiation for cancer treatments can also sometimes cause PF. However, many times PF is “idiopathic,” meaning the cause is unknown.

What are common symptoms of pulmonary fibrosis? The most common symptoms of PF are a dry, persistent cough and unusual (increased for you) breathlessness with activity. Many people with PF also experience fatigue or feel constantly worn out.

How many people have pulmonary fibrosis? Pulmonary fibrosis is considered a rare disease. There are over 200,000 Americans living with PF. PF is much more common in older adults, but it can affect people of all ages.

Can PF run in the family? Yes. Anywhere from 3% to 20% of people with PF have another family member with PF. However, this does not mean that 20% of your family will develop PF. In most cases, the chance that a family member will develop PF is unclear. Anyone with further questions is encouraged to talk to their doctor or a genetic counselor about chances that a family member will develop PF.

What are some of the available treatments for pulmonary fibrosis? Treatments for PF depend on each person's diagnosis and particular situation. Some treatments include oxygen therapy, pulmonary rehabilitation, and, for some types of PF, medications. Lung transplantation (replacing one or both lungs with lungs from a deceased donor) may be an option for some people.

How can I help someone with pulmonary fibrosis? You can ask them what is most helpful. Each person with PF has a different experience. You can see examples of how other patients and caregivers live with PF at [YouTube.com/PulmonaryFibrosisFoundation](https://www.youtube.com/PulmonaryFibrosisFoundation).

How can I learn more? Visit the Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation website at pulmonaryfibrosis.org or contact the PFF Help Center at [844.TalkPFF](tel:8448255733) (844.825.5733) or help@pulmonaryfibrosis.org.

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