



Pulmonary fibrosis

Hypersensitivity pneumonitis, formerly called extrinsic allergic alveolitis (EAA)

Hypersensitivity pneumonitis (HP) happens if your lungs develop an immune response – hypersensitivity – to something you breathe in which results in inflammation of the lung tissue – pneumonitis.

One example is **farmer's lung**. This is caused by breathing in mould that grows on hay, straw and grain. Another is **bird fancier's lung**, caused by breathing in particles from feathers or bird droppings. Many other substances can cause similar disease patterns. It can be very difficult to find the exact cause.

Symptoms

The symptoms, including cough, shortness of breath and sometimes fever and joint pains, can come on suddenly after you've been exposed. This is the acute form of the condition. It goes away – without leading to fibrosis of the lung – if you can permanently avoid the substance that caused the attack.

In other cases, symptoms of breathlessness and cough may only appear more gradually, perhaps over many years, as a result of permanent scarring of the lungs. This is called chronic, or long-term, hypersensitivity pneumonitis and often a specific cause cannot be found.

Treatment

HP is regarded as a more treatable cause of pulmonary fibrosis, but it can cause progressive symptoms and become hard to treat. If a specific cause is identified, it's really important to completely avoid exposure to it.

You may need to take anti-inflammatory medication called steroids for a few weeks or months. If you need steroids to control the condition for longer, your doctor may recommend more drugs to reduce the risk of side effects associated with steroids.

Get in touch with us to find support near you.

Helpline: 03000 030 555

Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm

Ringling our helpline never costs more than a local call and is usually free, even from a mobile.

helpline@blf.org.uk

blf.org.uk

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We value feedback on our information. To let us know your views, and for the most up to date version of this information and references, call the helpline or visit **blf.org.uk**

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