

WHY AM I BREATHLESS

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There are many reasons why people become breathless and there are multiple body systems that if not functioning well can lead to breathlessness. Lifestyle factors can be just as important.

The primary reasons someone might be breathless include:

- Heart disease: if the heart is not pumping well you may develop breathlessness with exertion or when lying flat or during the night
- Lung Disease and this can be a reflection of how well the air flows in and out of the lung; how well the blood flows through the lung and how well air can be transferred from lung to blood. There are many lung disorders that can impact on this
- Anaemia (not enough haemoglobin in your blood), if severe enough, can leave you breathless
- Obesity and lack of fitness are other obvious but underestimated causes

It is important to appreciate that breathlessness does not equal a low oxygen. Breathlessness is a reflection of how hard you have to work to get oxygen to your tissues.

To determine the cause of breathlessness requires a careful history of when you are breathless and what if anything makes it worse or better. Tests of your lung, blood and heart may all be required to determine the cause and to then initiate appropriate treatment.

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