Introduction to the respiratory system pathophysiology

Structural and functional properties of airways and lungs
- defence mechanisms of airways and lungs

Respiration as a process ensuring a gas exchange
- ventilation & diffusion & perfusion

Ventilation – pulmonary mechanics
- volumes and capacities
- static and dynamic airflow resistance
- dynamic collapse
- obstruction vs. restriction

Diffusion – principles and determinants
- alveolar-capillary membrane
- „oxygen cascade“

Lung circulation – principles and determinants

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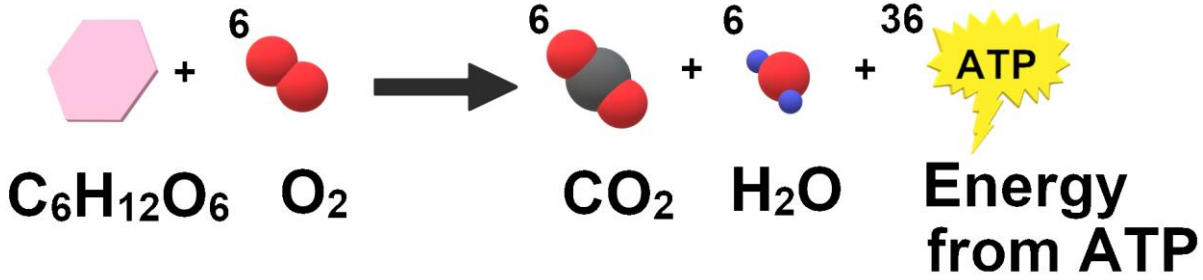
Warming up questions

- (1) **WHY** do we breathe???



- (2) **HOW** do we breathe???
  - principles of the quiet breathing

- (3) **WHEN** do we breathe???
  - all the time/non-stop, the death = „until the last breath“

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STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONAL CONSIDERATIONS IMPORTANT FOR PP OF RESPIRATION & PARTICULAR DISORDERS

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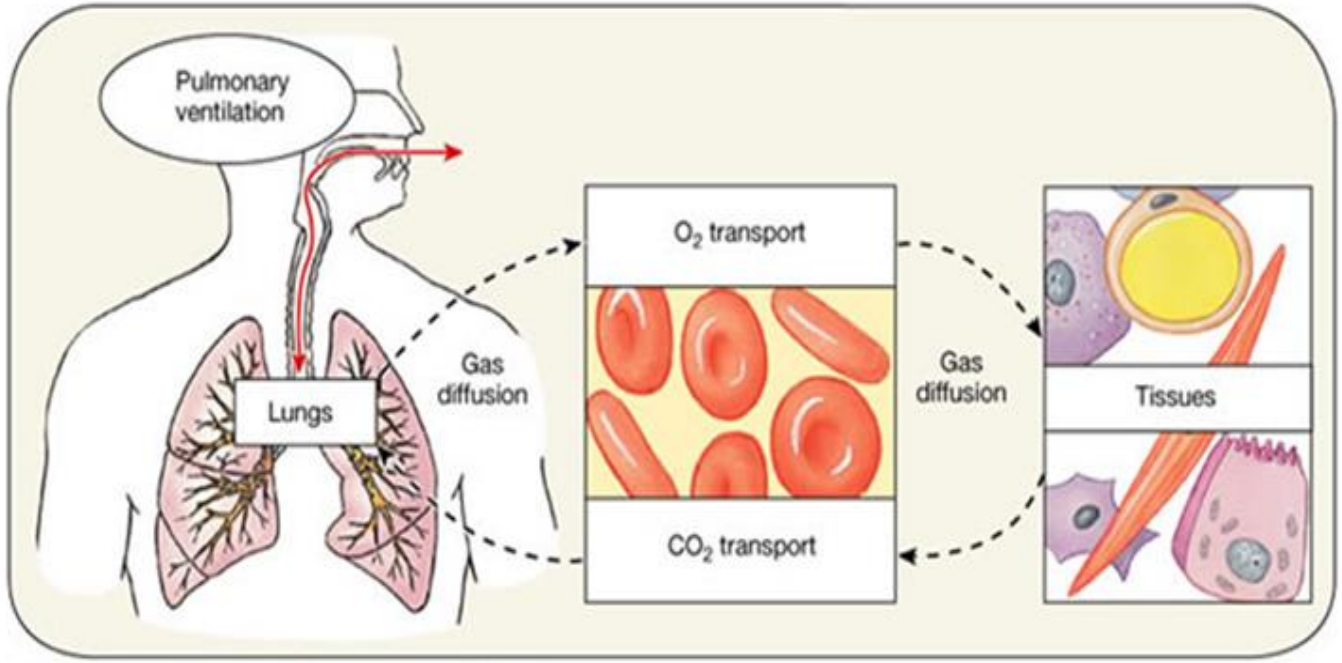
Respiration and gas exchange in the lungs

- **ventilation** = mechanical process
  - breathing in narrower meaning
- **diffusion** = chemical process
  - through alveolo-cappilary barrier
- **perfusion** = circulatory process
  - circulation of blood in lungs

death from lung disease is almost always due to an inability to overcome the **altered mechanical properties** of the lung or chest wall, or both



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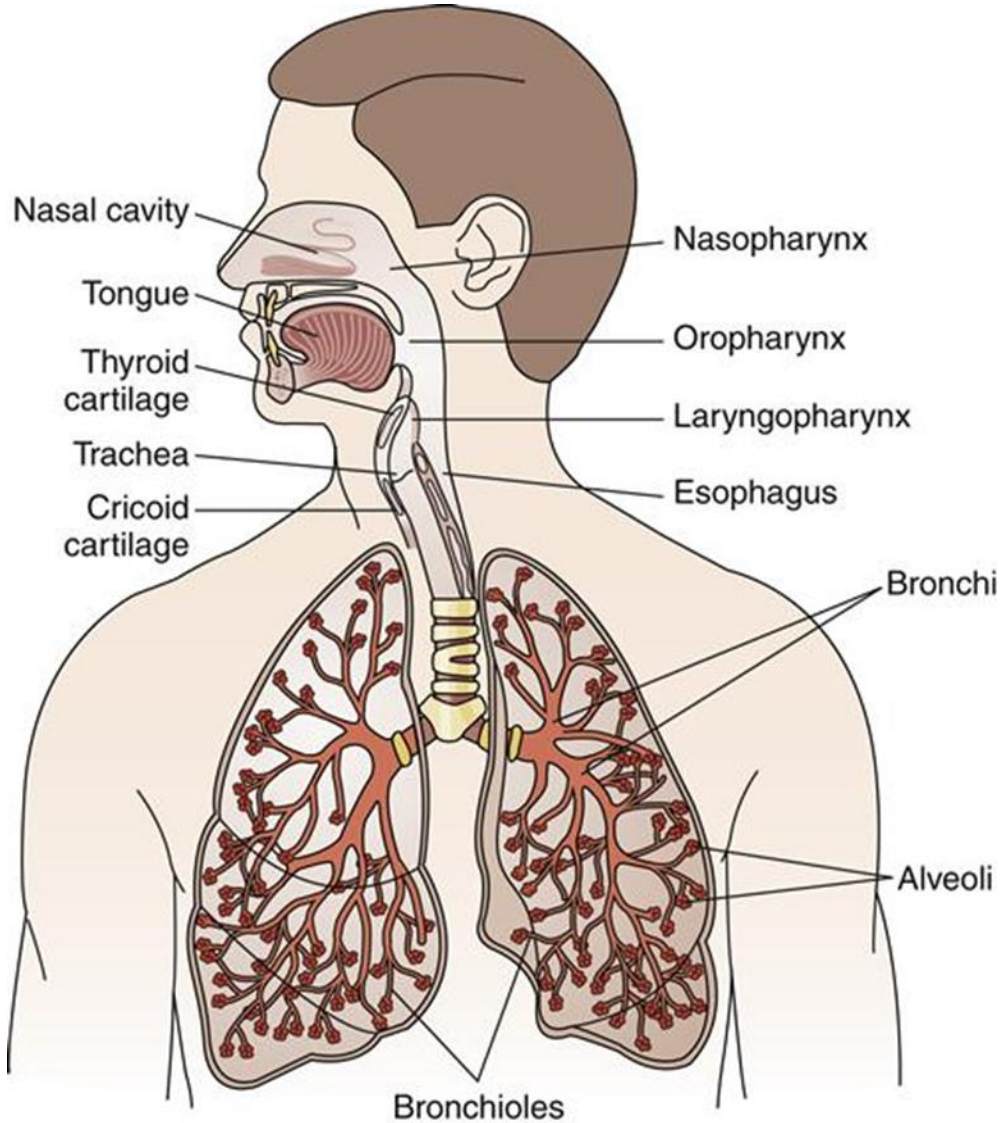
Nasal cavity
Nasopharynx
Tongue
Oropharynx
Thyroid cartilage
Laryngopharynx
Trachea
Esophagus
Cricoid cartilage
Bronchi
Alveoli
Bronchioles

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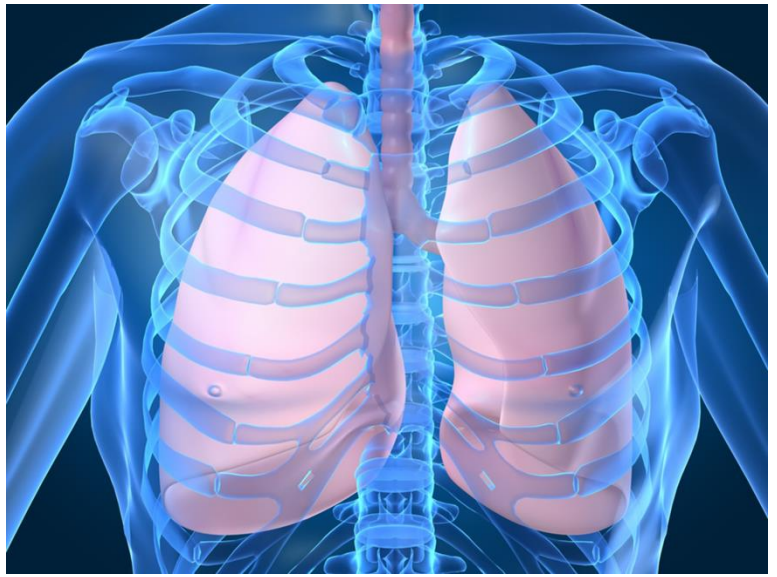
The delicate structure-function coupling of lungs

- The main role of the respiratory system is **GAS EXCHANGE**, i.e. **extraction of oxygen from the external environment** and **disposal of** waste gases, principally **carbon dioxide**
  - at the end of deep breath 80% of lung volume is air, 10% blood and 10% tissue
    - lung tissue spreads over an enormous area !
- The lungs have to provide
  - a **large surface area** accessible to the environment (~tennis court area) for gas exchange
  - alveoli walls have to present **minimal resistance to gas diffusion**
- Close contact with the external environment means lungs can be damaged by dusts, gases and infective agents
  - **host defence** is therefore a key priority for the lung and is achieved by a combination of structural and immunological means



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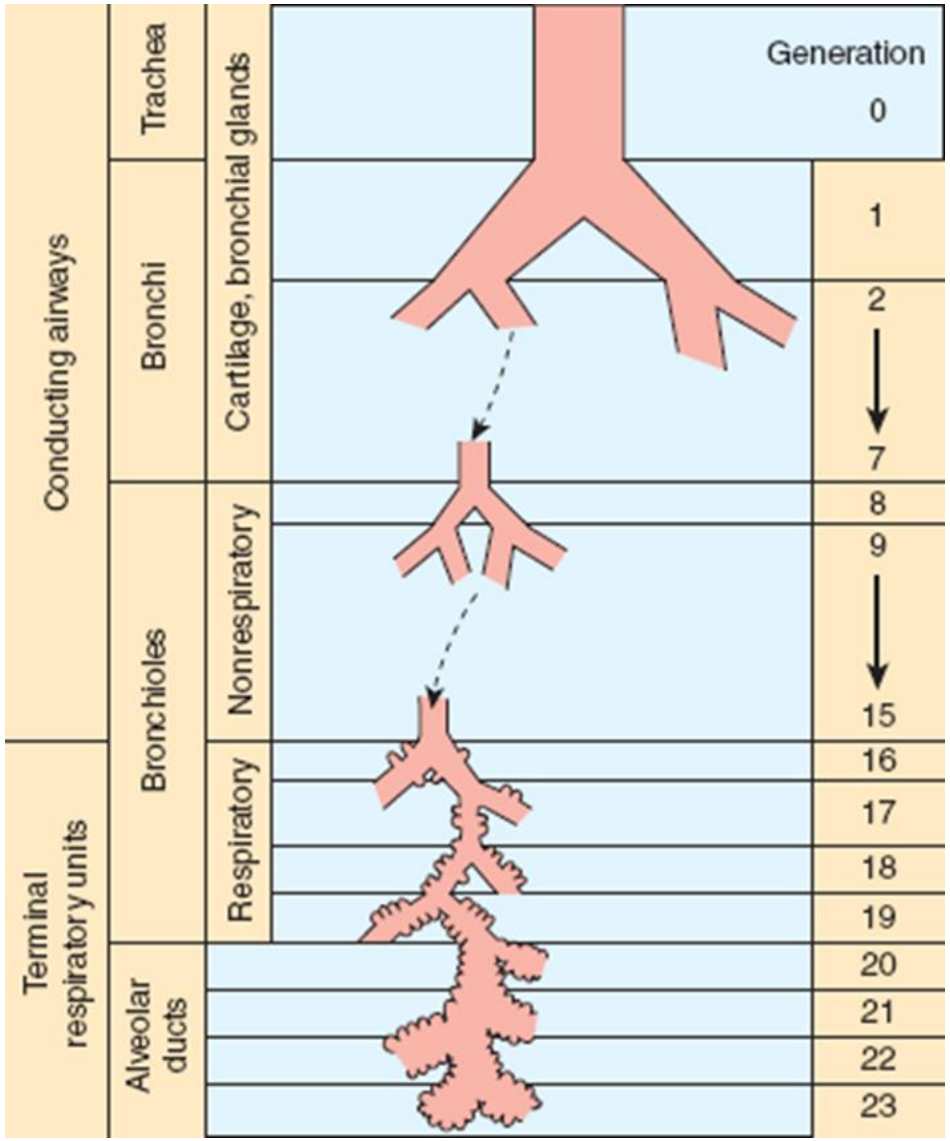
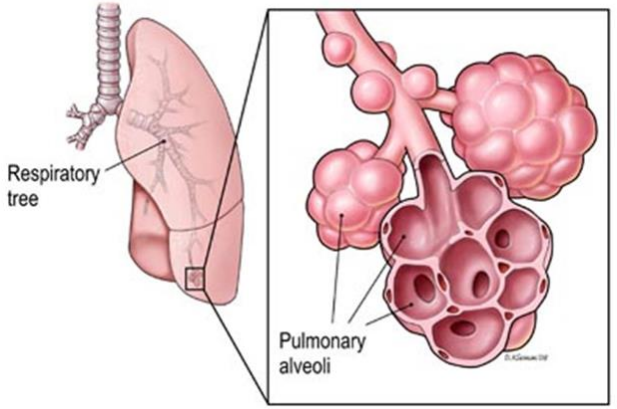
Structure of airways



- There are about 23 (18-30) divisions (2^{23} i.e. approx. 8 millions of sacs) between the trachea and the alveoli
  - the first seven divisions, the bronchi have:
    - walls consisting of cartilage and smooth muscle
    - epithelial lining with cilia and goblet cells
    - submucosal mucus-secreting glands
    - endocrine cells - Kulchitsky or APUD (amine precursor and uptake decarboxylation) containing 5-hydroxytryptamine
  - the next 16-18 divisions the bronchioles have:
    - no cartilage
    - muscular layer progressively becomes thinner
    - a single layer of ciliated cells but very few goblet cells
    - granulated Clara cells that produce a surfactant-like substance



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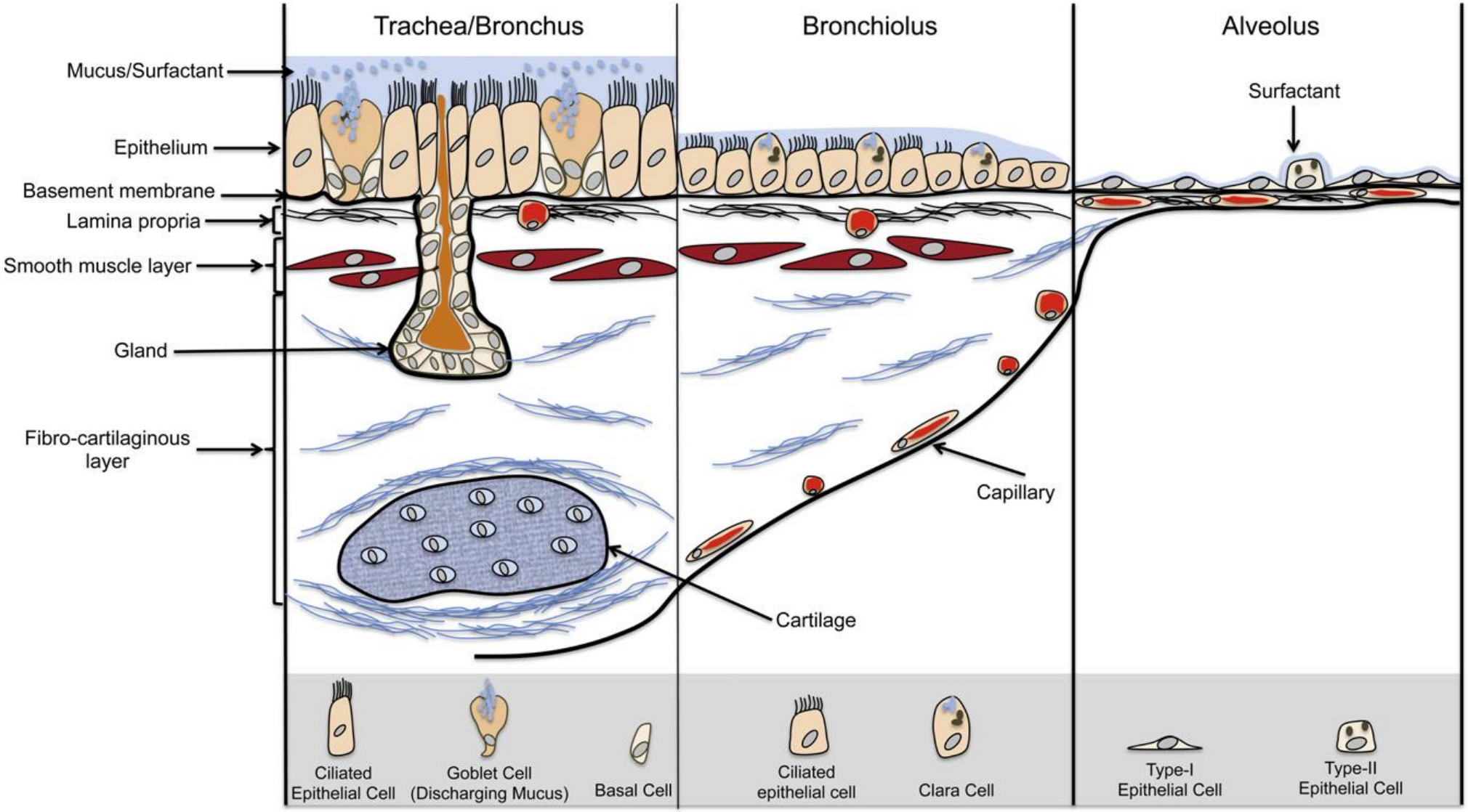
Wall structure of conducting airways and respiratory region



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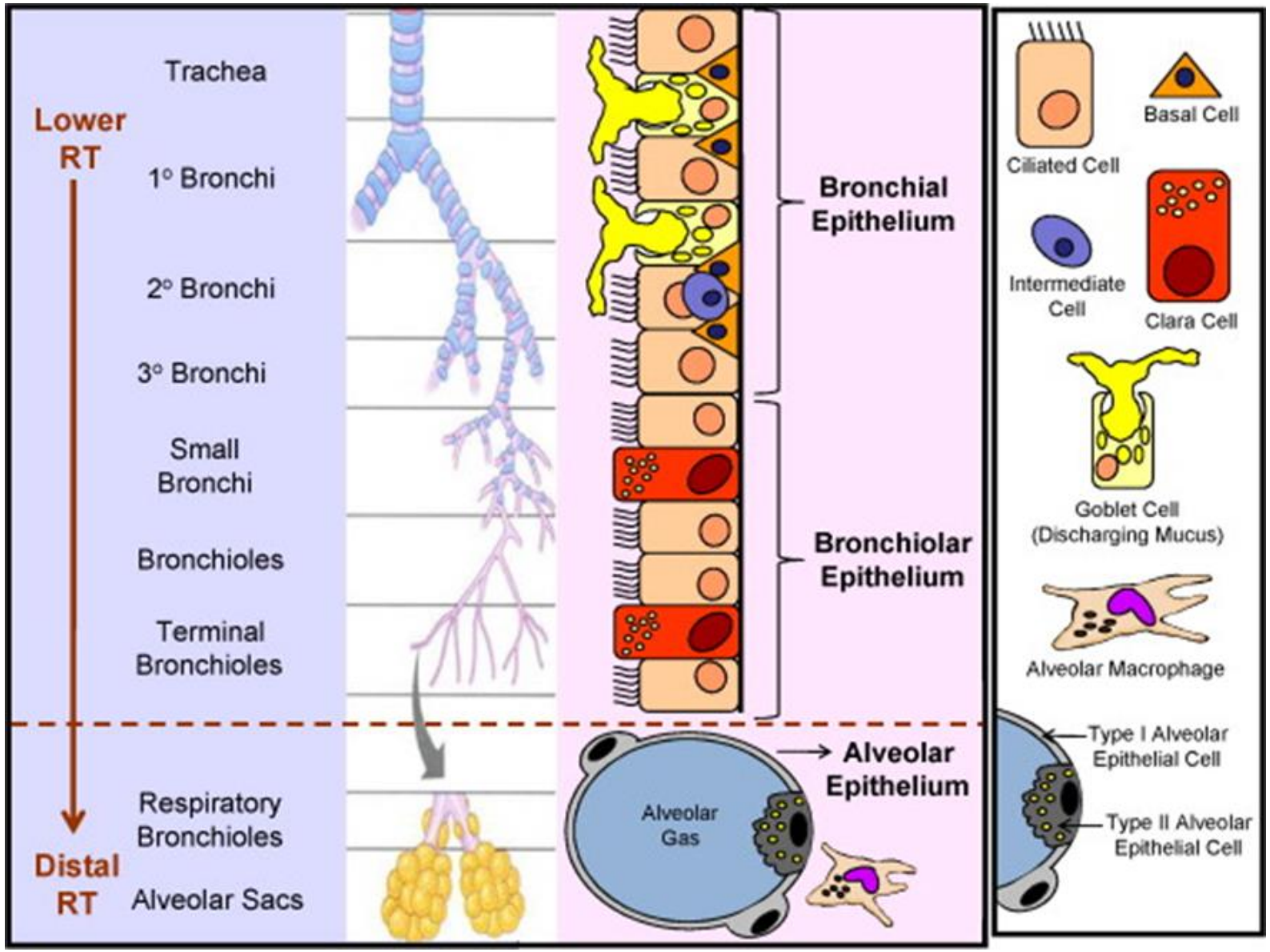
Lung defense – multiple mechanisms (details later)



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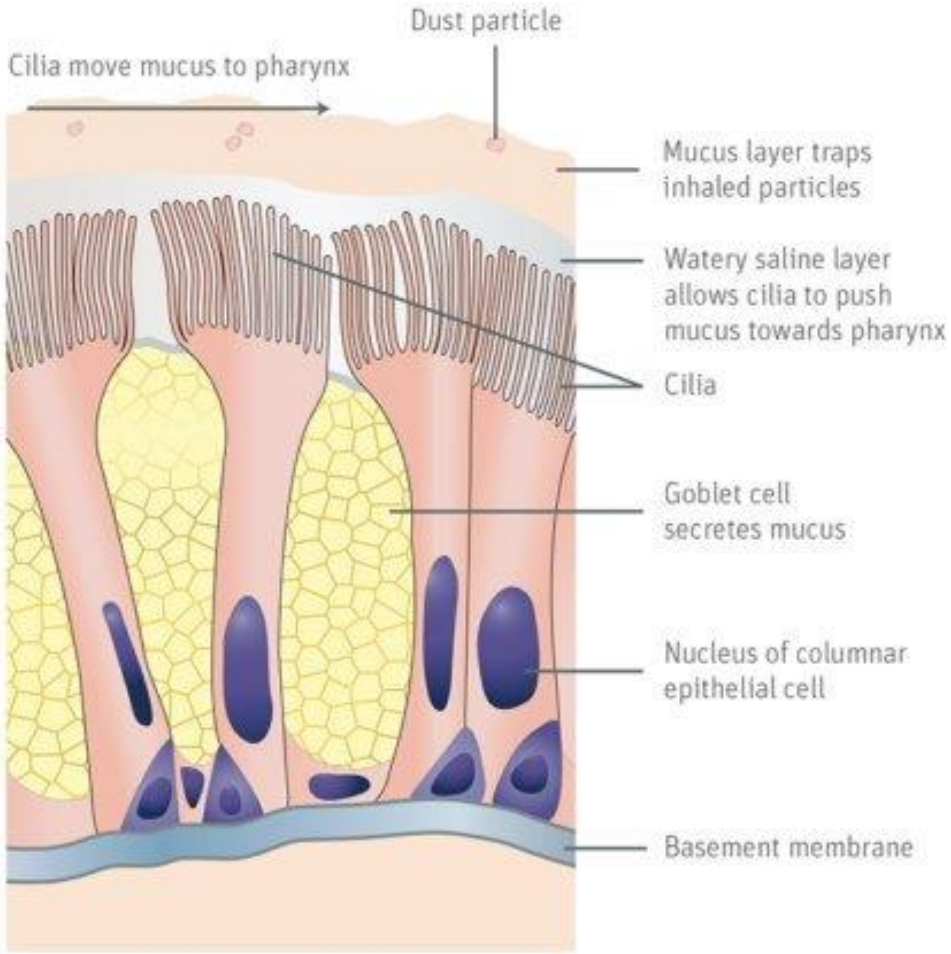
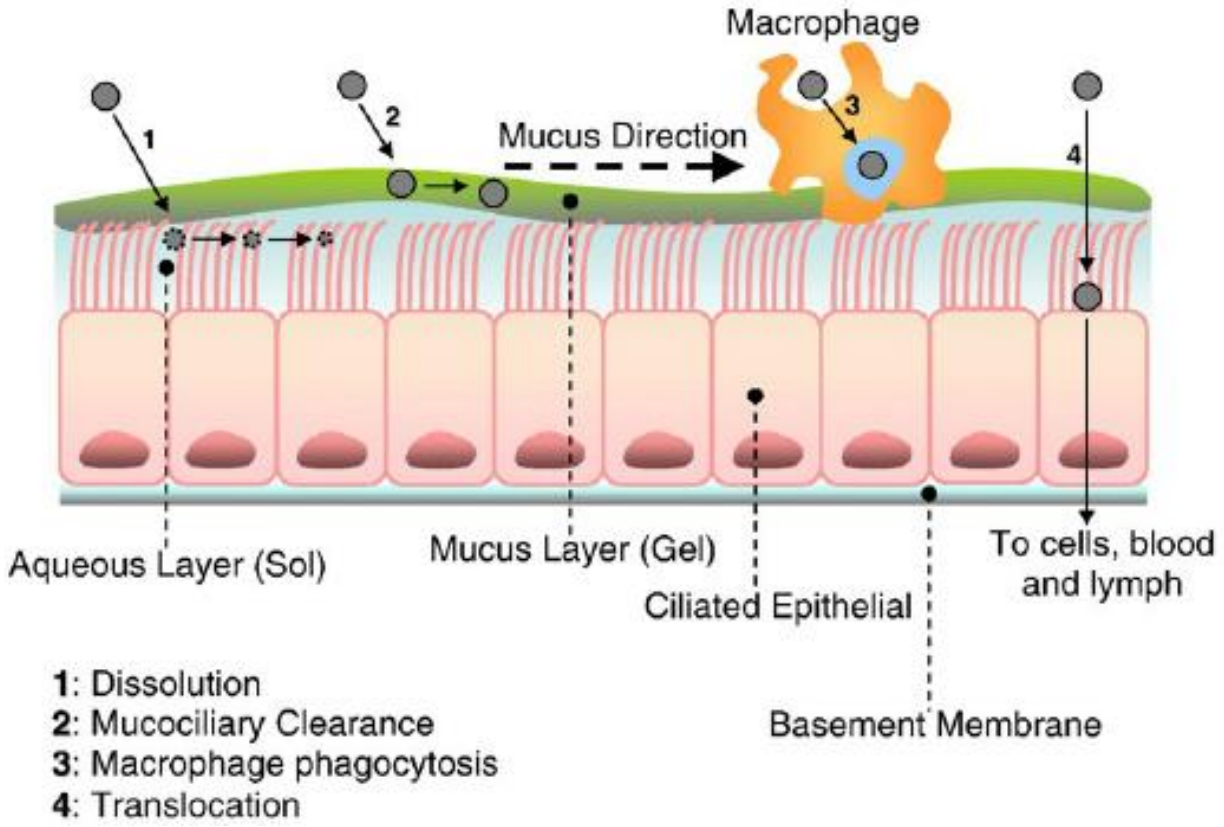
Mucocilliary escalator





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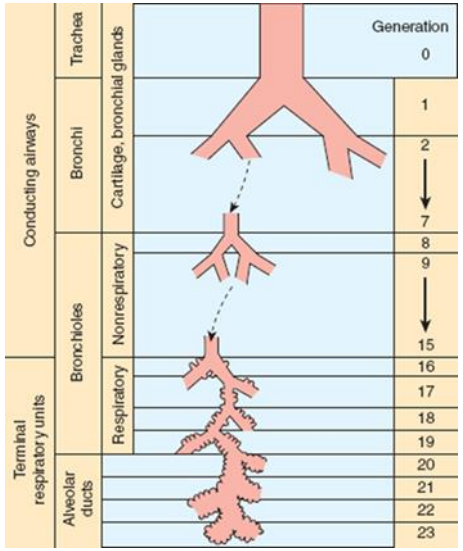
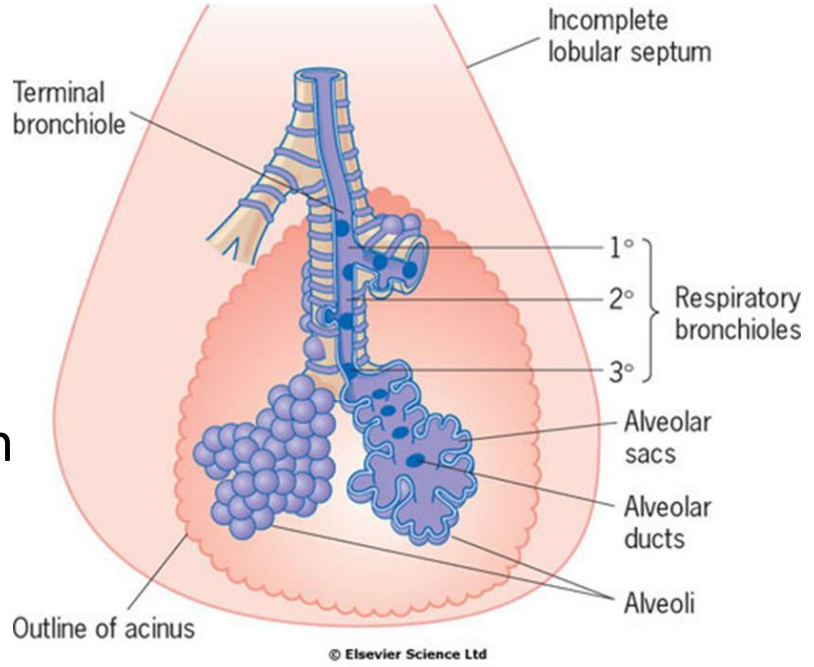
Functional classification of airways

- Conducting airways (= **anatomical dead space**) – g1-15
  - nose (mouth)
  - larynx
  - trachea
  - main bronchi & bronchioles
  - gas conduction, humidification & warming, defense
- Acinar airways (= **respiratory space**) – g16-23
  - respiratory bronchioles
  - alveolar ducts & sacs
  - alveoli
  - gas exchange
- The concept of acinus
  - the functional 3-D unit - part of parenchyma - in wh airways have alveoli attached to their wall and thus participating in gas exchange





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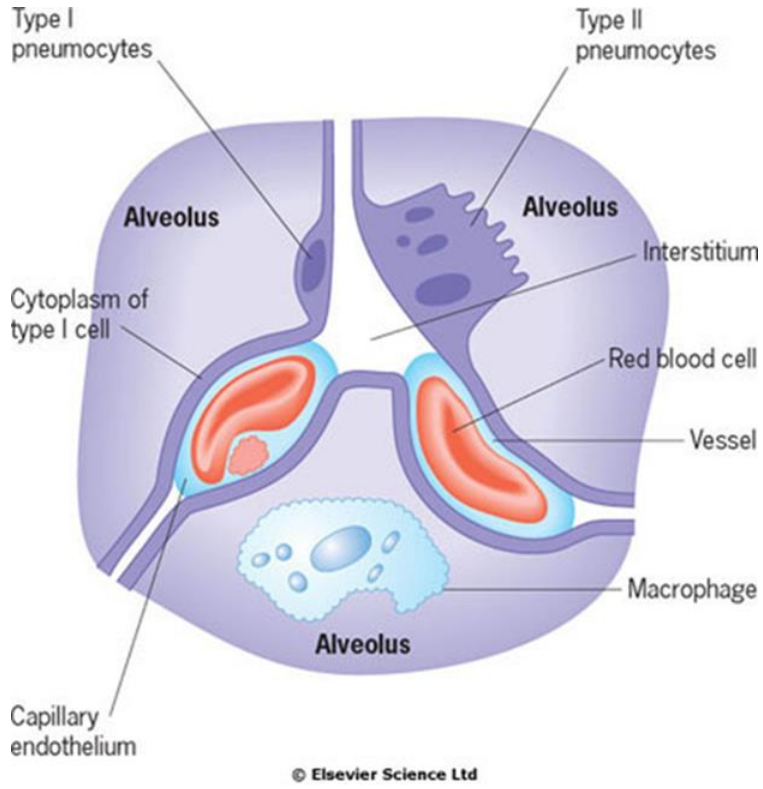
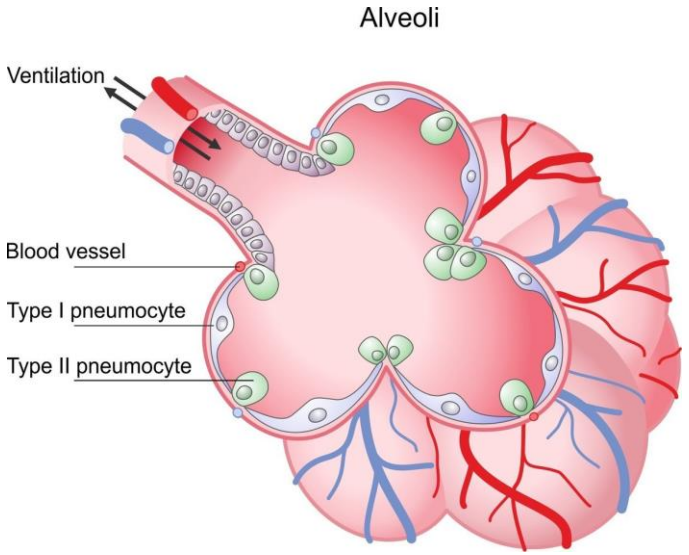
Alveoli

- There are approximately 300-400 million alveoli in each lung with the total surface area is 40-80m^2
- Cell types of the epithelial lining
  - **type I pneumocytes**
    - an extremely thin cytoplasm, and thus provide only a thin barrier to gas exchange, derived from type II pneumocytes
    - connected to each other by tight junctions that limit the fluid movements in and out of the alveoli
    - easily damageable, but cannot divide!
  - **type II pneumocytes**
    - slightly more numerous than type I cells but cover less of the epithelial lining
    - the source of type I cells and surfactant
  - **macrophages**





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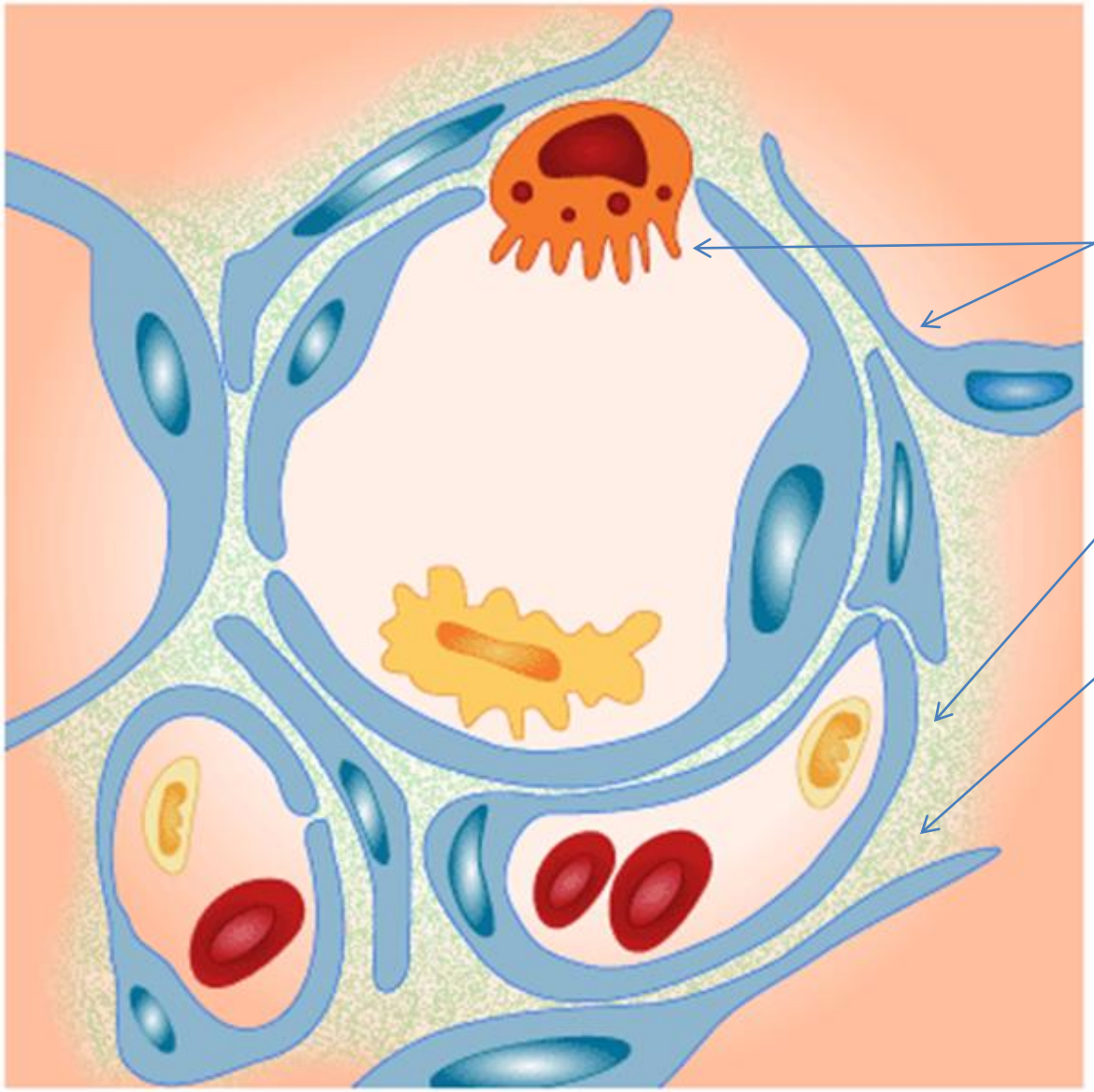
Alveolo - capillary barrier



- Alveolar epithelia
  - type I
  - type II
- Capillary endothelium
  - non-fenestrated
- Interstitium
  - cells (very few!)
    - fibroblasts
    - contractile cells
    - immune cells (interstitial macrophages, mast cells, …)
  - ECM
    - elastin and collagen fibrils

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(1) PRINCIPLES OF VENTILATION AND ITS ABNORMALITIES

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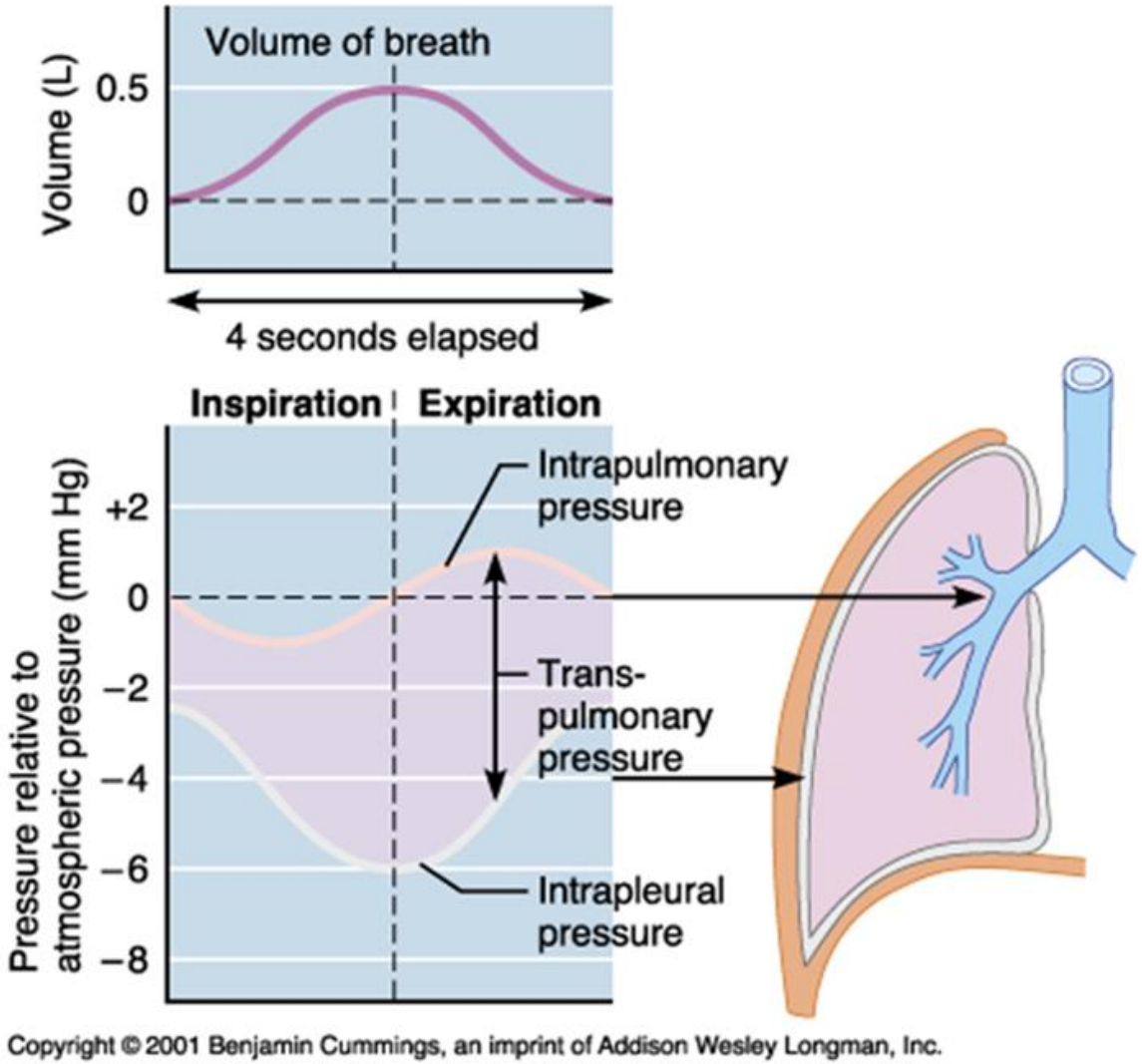
Ventilation (breathing) as a mechanical process



- **Inspiration**
  - an active process that results from the descent of the **diaphragm** and movement of the ribs upwards and outwards under the influence of the external **intercostal muscles**
    - in resting healthy individuals, contraction of the diaphragm is responsible for most inspiration
  - respiratory muscles are similar to other skeletal muscles but are **less prone to fatigue**
    - weakness may play a part in respiratory failure resulting from neurological and muscle disorders and possibly with severe chronic airflow limitation
  - inspiration against increased resistance may require the use of the accessory muscles of ventilation
    - sternocleidomastoid and scalene muscles
- **Expiration**
  - follows **passively** as a result of gradual lessening of contraction of the intercostal muscles, allowing the lungs to collapse under the influence of their own elastic forces (**elastic recoil and surface tension**)
  - forced expiration is also accomplished with the aid of accessory muscles
    - abdominal wall and internal intercostal muscles

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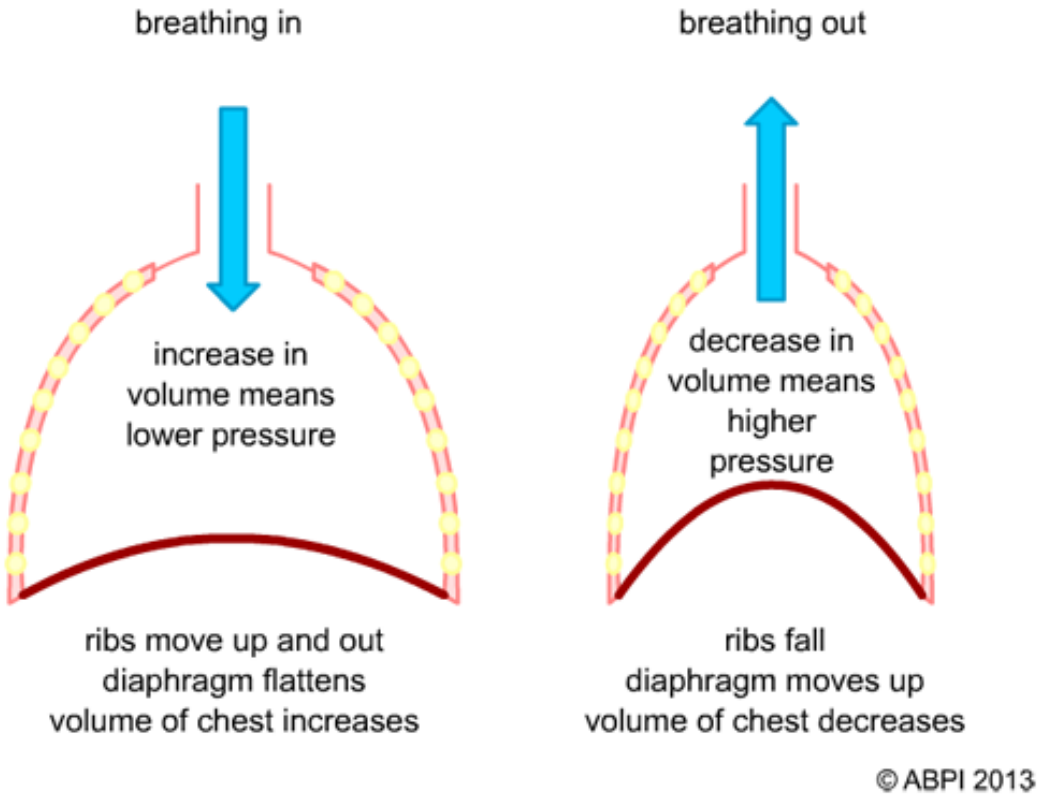
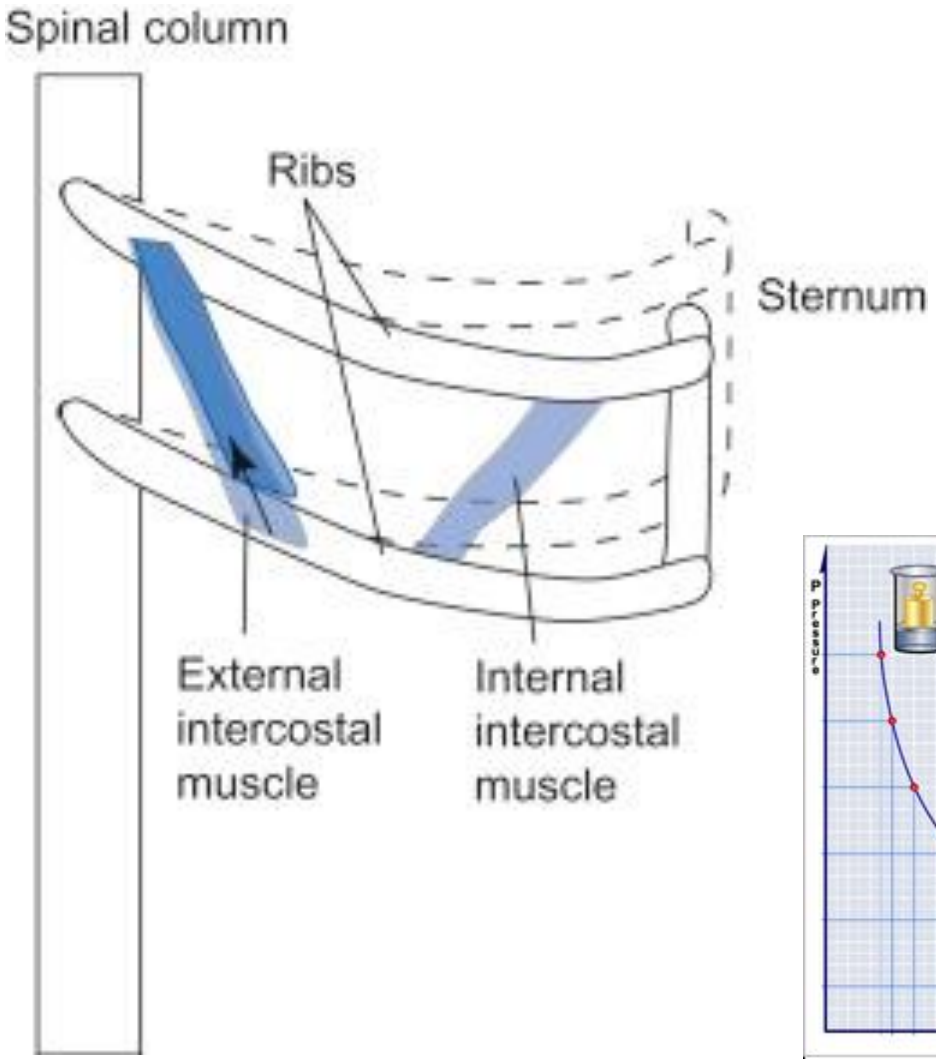
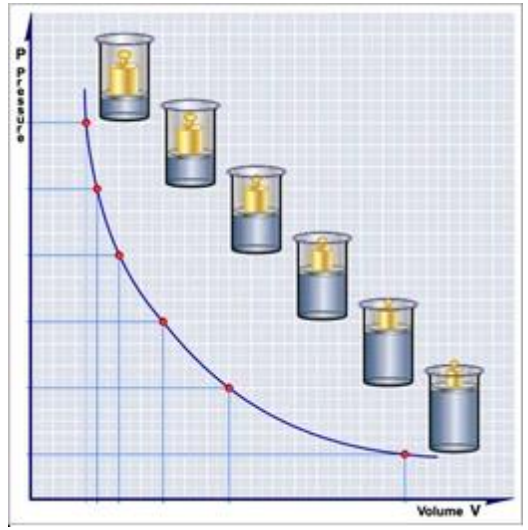
Muscles performing inspiration







Boyle-Mariotte law (for ideal gas)

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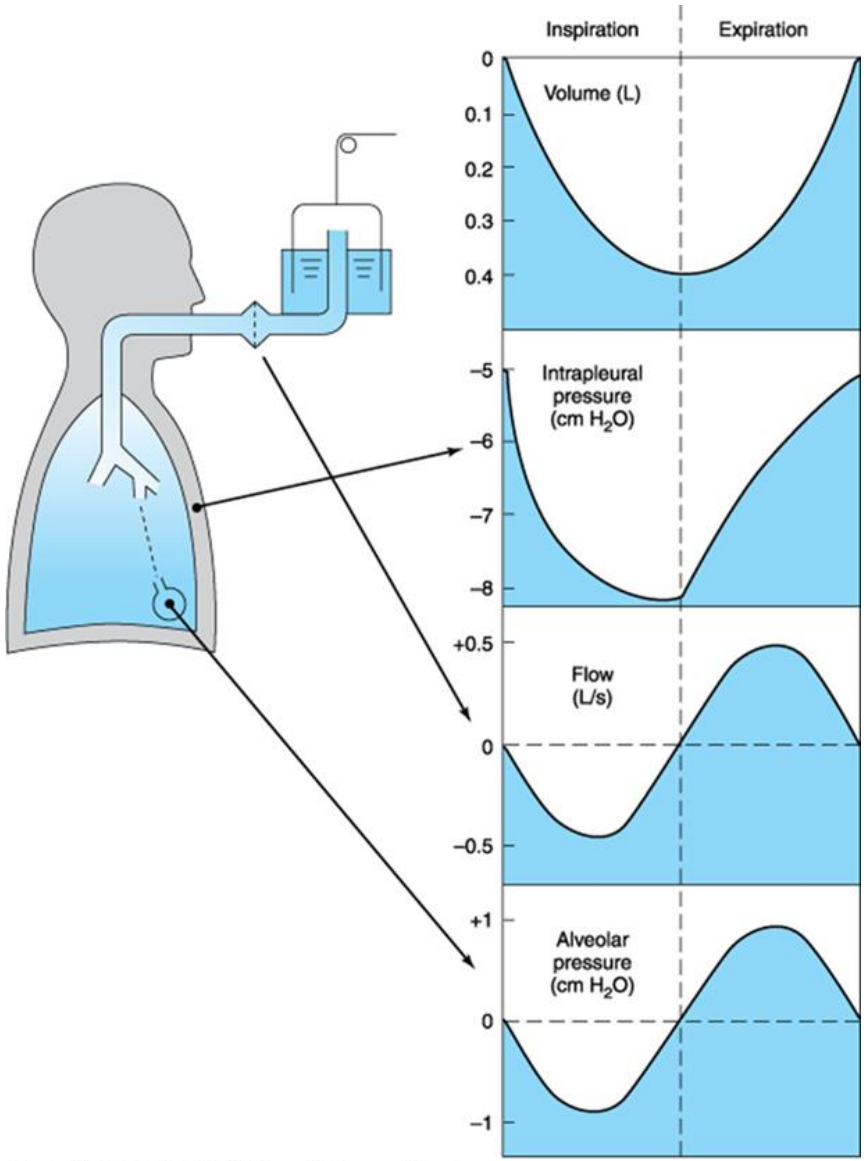
Mechanics of ventilation – breathing cycle



- pressures and pressure gradients
  - pressure on the body surface(P_{bs}),
    - usually equal to atmospheric (P_{ao})
  - alveolar pressure (P_{alv})
  - „elastic“ pressure (P_el)
    - generated by lung parenchyma and surface tension
  - pressure in pleural cavity (P_{pl})
  - trans-pulmonary pressure (P_L)
    - pressure difference between alveolus and pleural cavity
    - $P_L = P_{alv} - P_{pl}$
  - trans-thoracic pressure (P_{rs})
    - pressure difference between alveolus and body surface
    - determines actual phase of ventilation, i.e. inspirium or expirium
    - $P_{rs} = P_{alv} - P_{bs}$

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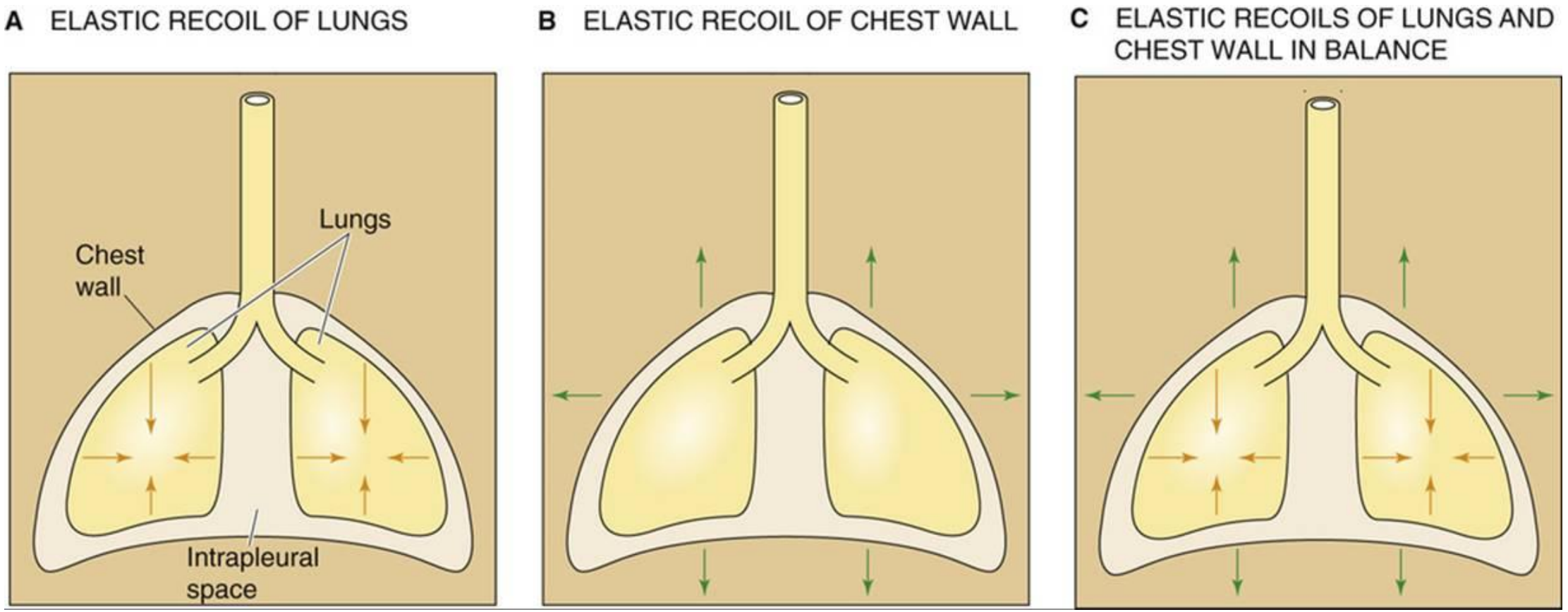
Mechanical properties of the chest wall vs. lungs

= opposing elastic recoil



lung has a tendency to shrink
(surface tension + lung elasticity)

chest has a tendency to expand
(anatomy of thoracic cavity and muscles)

resulting balance

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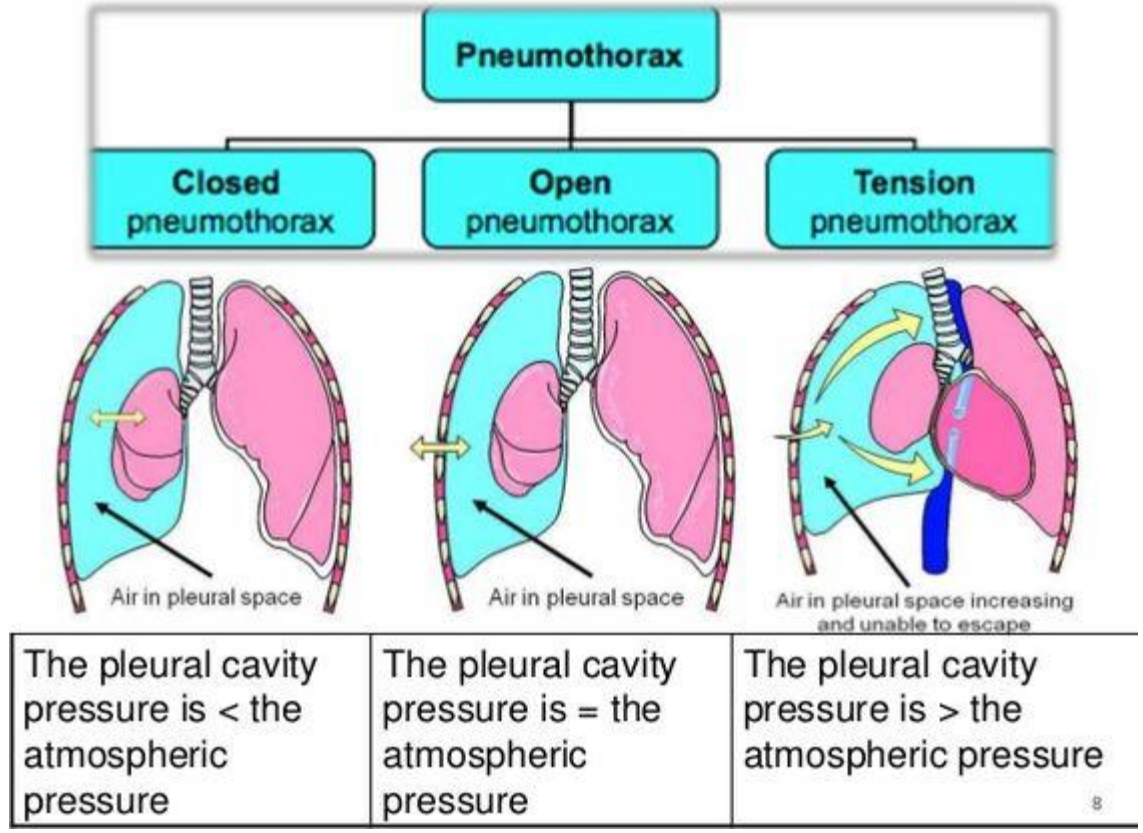
Pneumothorax = the absence of neg. i-pleural P



The pleural cavity pressure is < the atmospheric pressure	The pleural cavity pressure is = the atmospheric pressure	The pleural cavity pressure is > the atmospheric pressure

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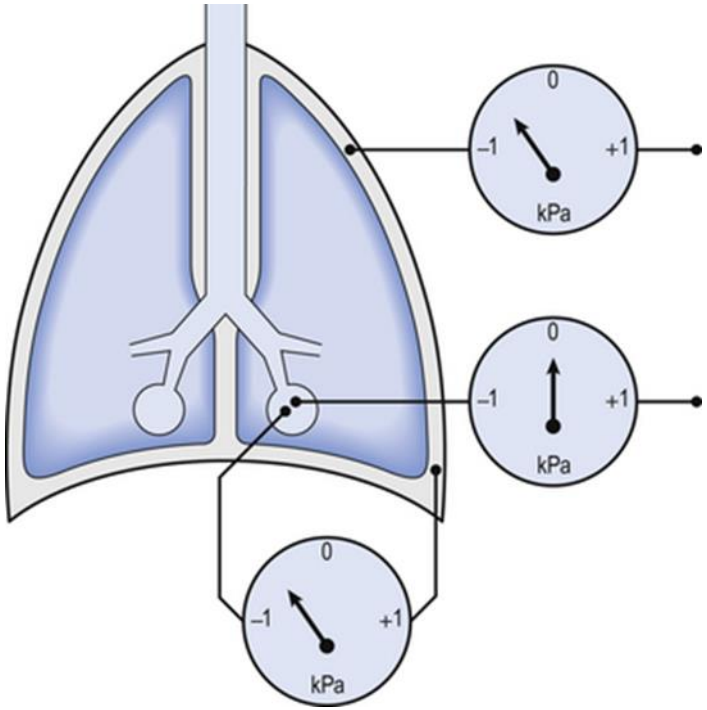
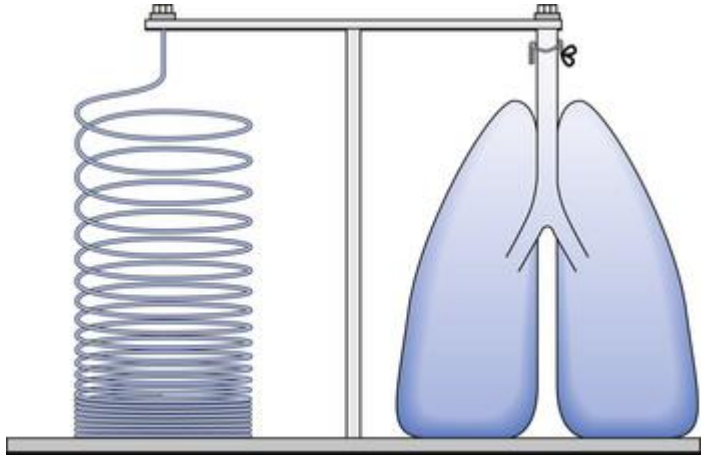
Is negative value of i-pleural P homogenous?

situation at the end of quiet expirium



gravitation and lung own weight decrease negativity at the bases (and vice versa on apexes)



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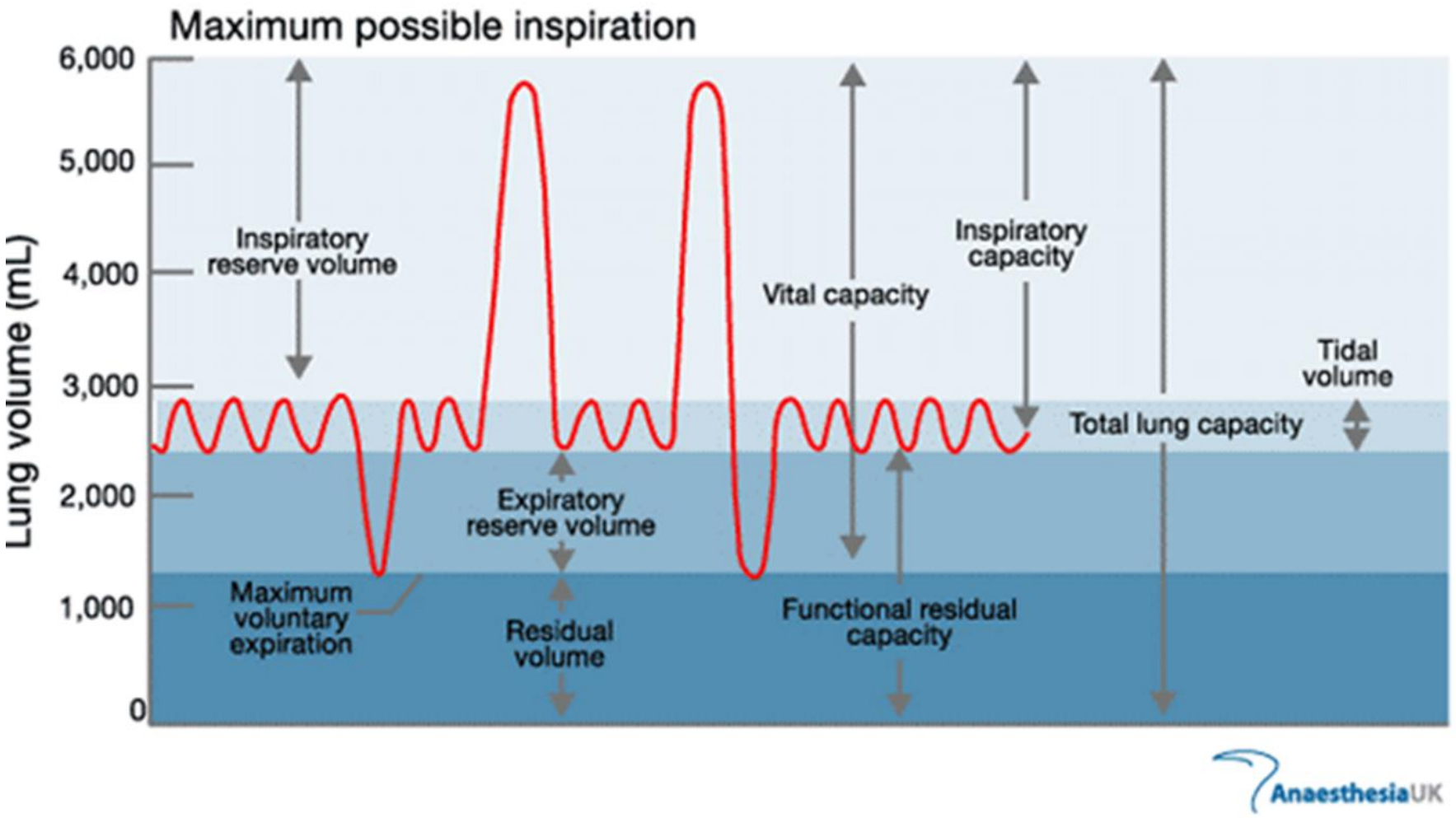
Lung volumes and capacities (tj. ≥ 2 volumes)



- The ratio of RV to TLC **(RV/TLC ratio)** in normal individuals is usually less than **0.25**
- abnormal = increased RV/TLC ratio in different types of pulmonary disease
  - obstructive diseases
    - ↑ RV
  - restrictive diseases
    - ↓ TLC

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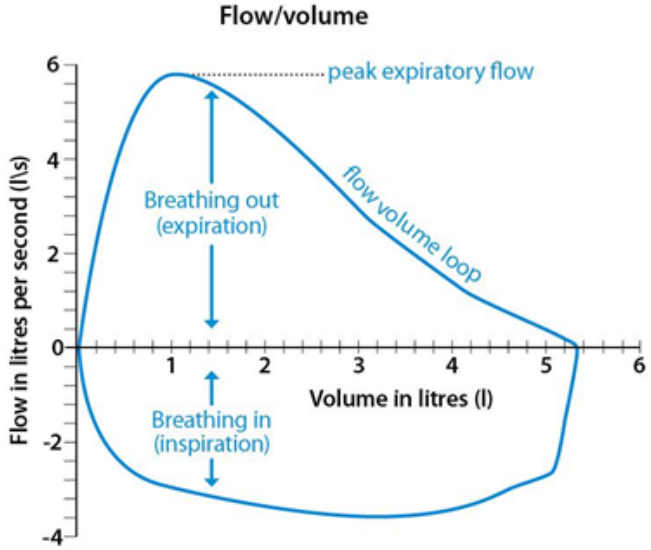
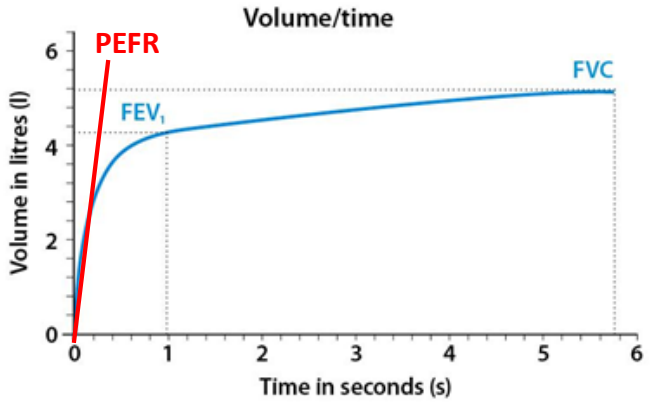
Spirometry





	Min	Ref	Max	Best	%Ref	SR
FEV1 [L]	3.76	4.31	4.99	4.31	100	0.0
FVC [L]	4.71	5.35	5.81	5.35	100	0.0
VC [L]	4.82	5.47	5.92	5.47	100	0.0
FEV1/VC [%]	68.1	78.8	-	78.8	100	0.0
		Normal range		Your best effort		

- absolutely most common pulmonary function test (PFT)
- allows to classify ventilation disorders
  - obstructive
  - restrictive
  - combined
- useful for provocation tests too
  - COPD vs. asthma → bronchodilator (s-B_2agonist)
  - bronchial hyperreactivity (metacholine)

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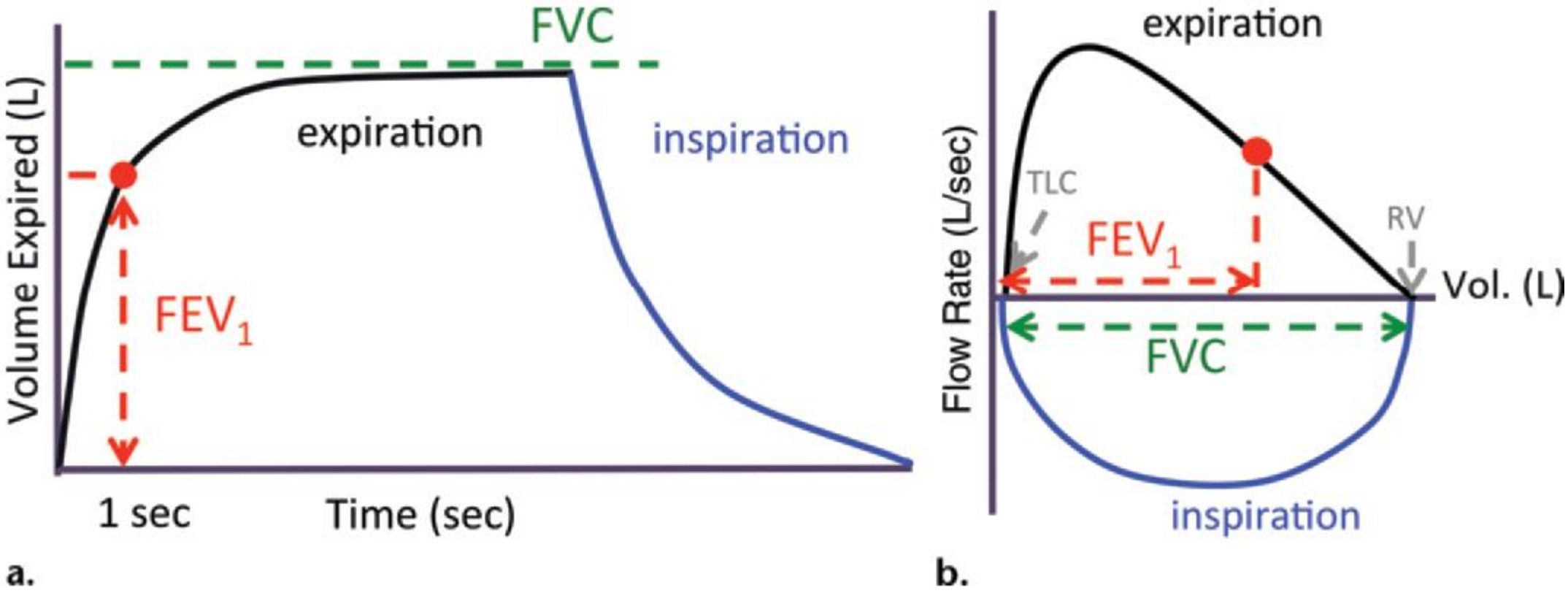
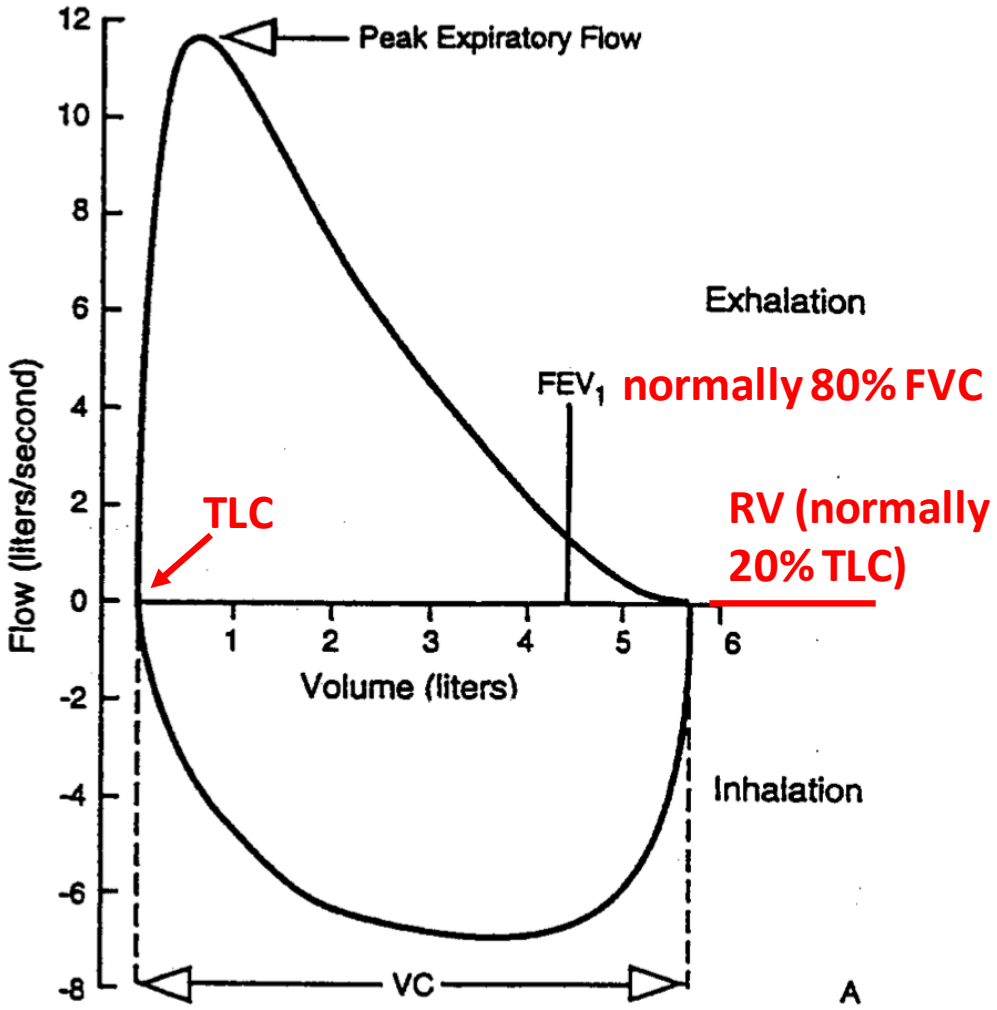
The most important parameters



Spirometry limitation



- spirometry can measure almost all volumes and capacities with exception of RV
  - RV, FRC and TLC

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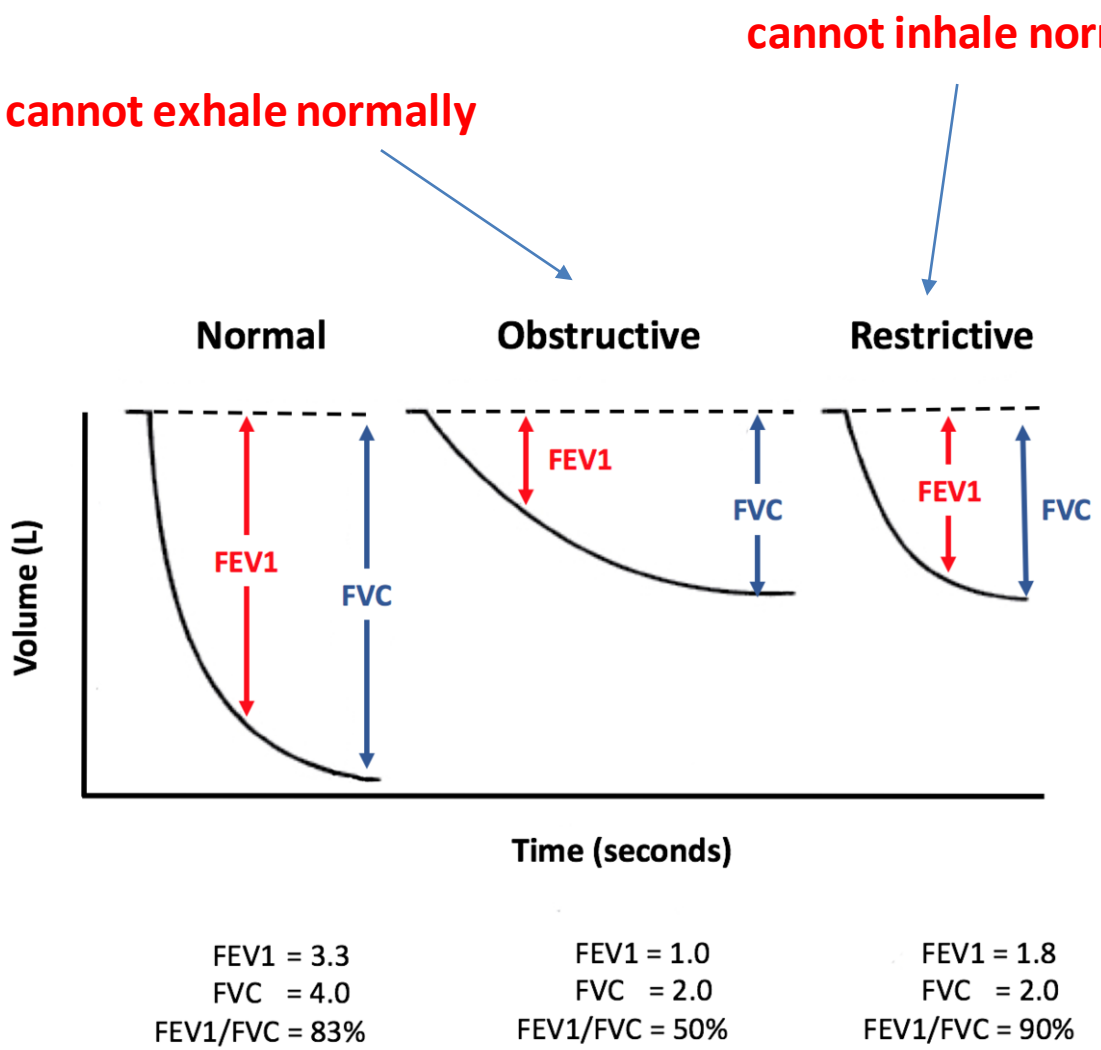
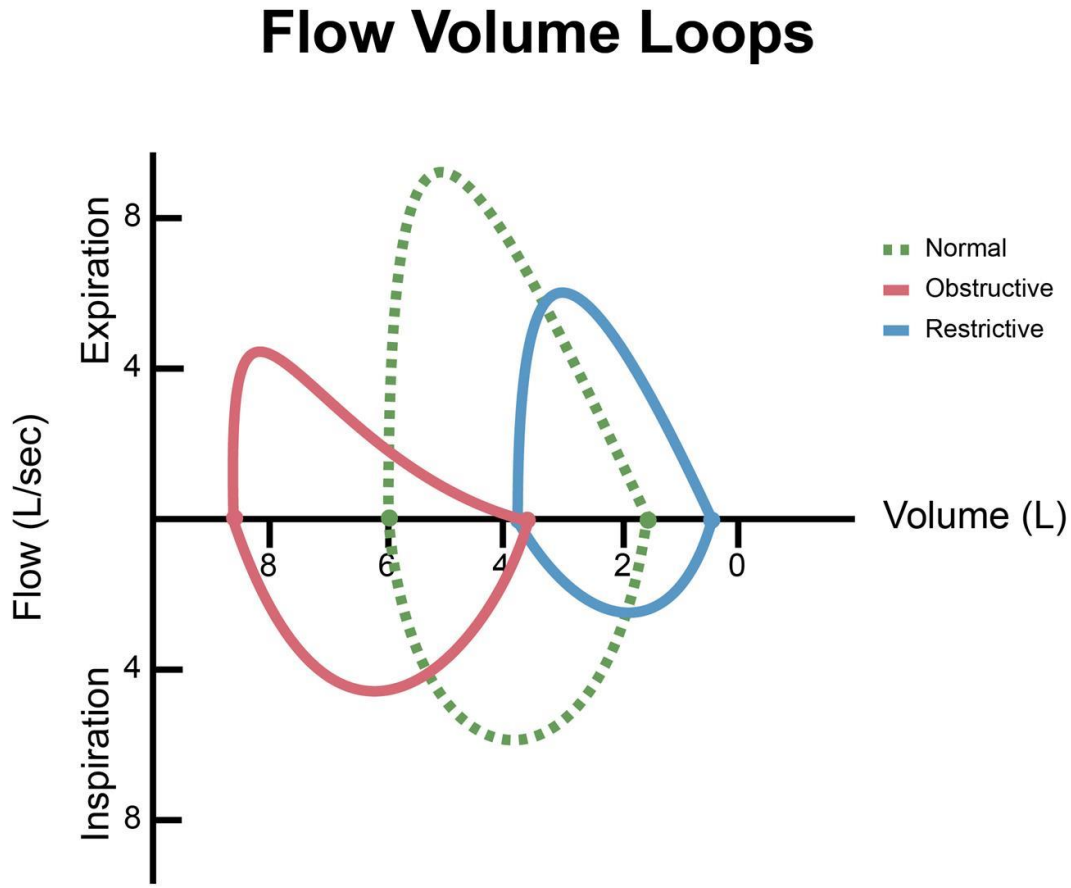
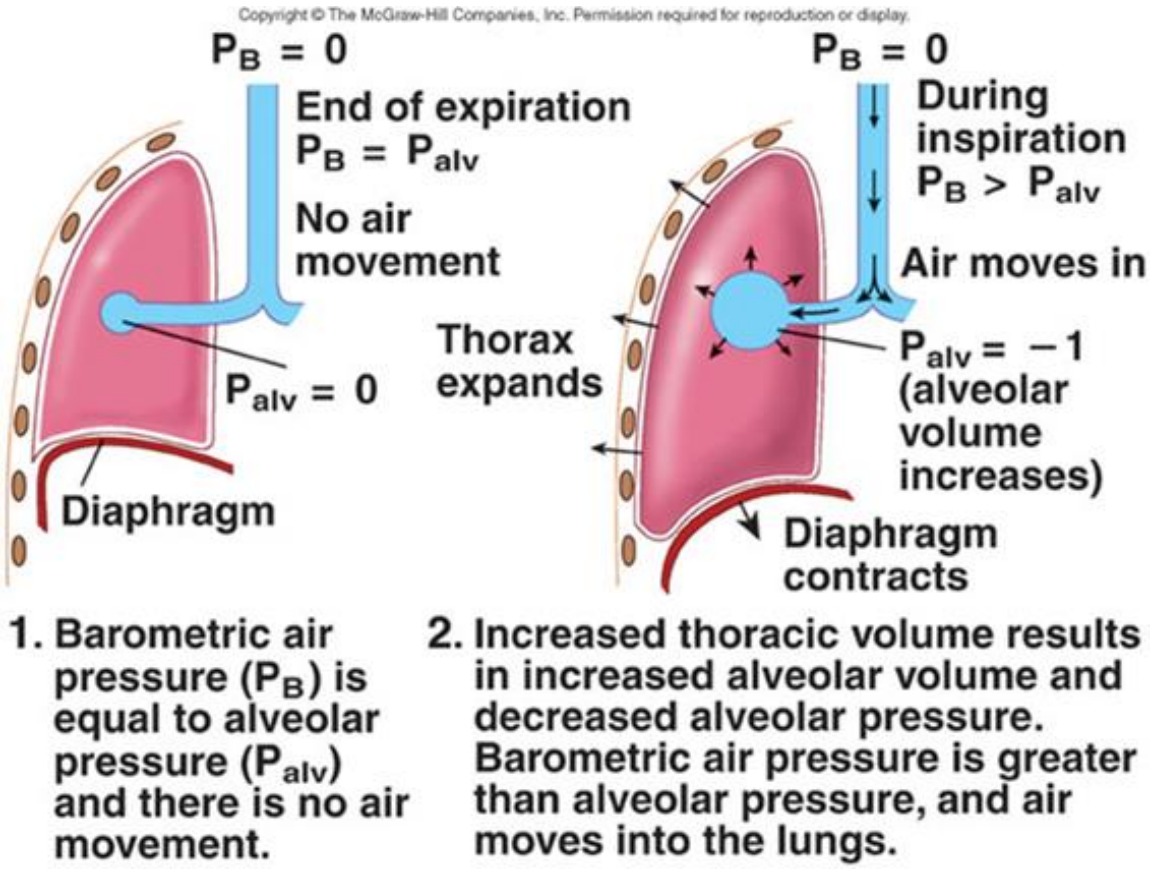
Spirometry in diagnosis of main types of ventilation disorders





Ventilation



- pressure necessary to distend lungs has to overcome two kinds of resistances
  - **(1) STATIC = elastic recoil**
    - in the respiratory part of airways and lung parenchyma
  - **(2) DYNAMIC = airway resistance**
    - in the convection part of airways
- energy requirements for respiratory muscles to overcome these resistances are normally quite low
  - 2-5 % of a total O_2 consumption
- but increases dramatically when resistance increases (up to 30%)

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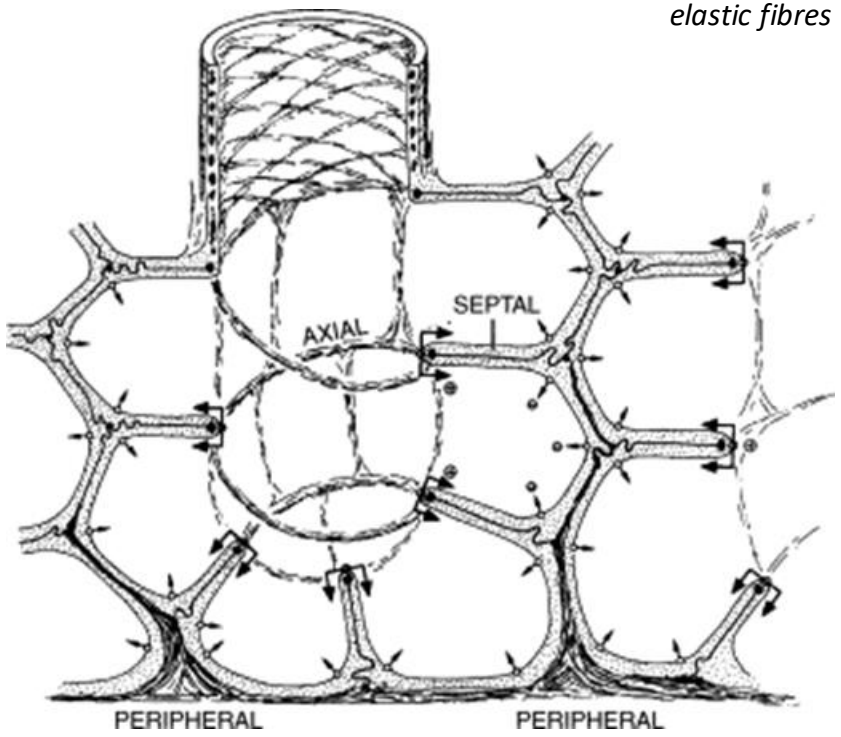
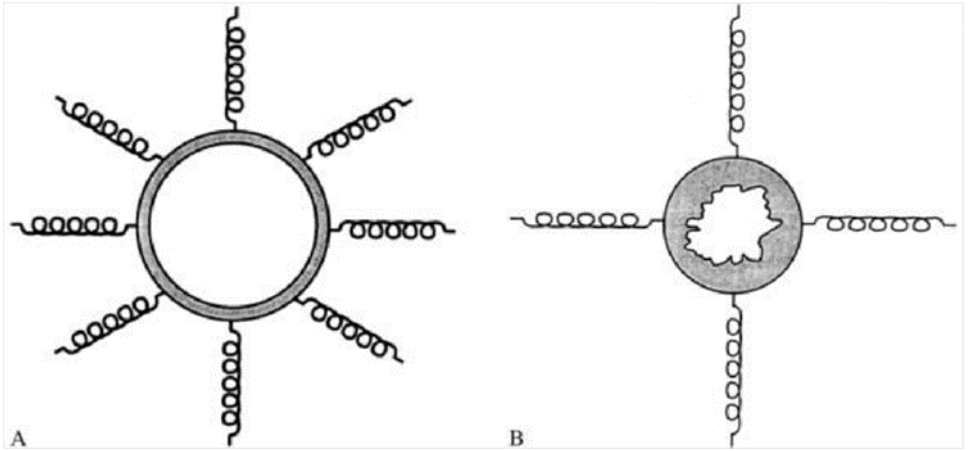
(ad 1) Elastic properties of the lung

- lungs have an inherent elastic property that causes them to tend to collapse generating a negative pressure within the pleural space
  - the strength of this retractive force relates to the volume of the lung
    - for example, at higher lung volumes the lung is stretched more, and a greater negative intrapleural pressure is generated
  - at the end of a quiet expiration, the retractive force exerted by the lungs is balanced by the tendency of the thoracic wall to spring outwards
    - at this point, respiratory muscles are resting and the volume of the lung is known as the **functional residual capacity** (FRC)

the system of airway elastic fibres





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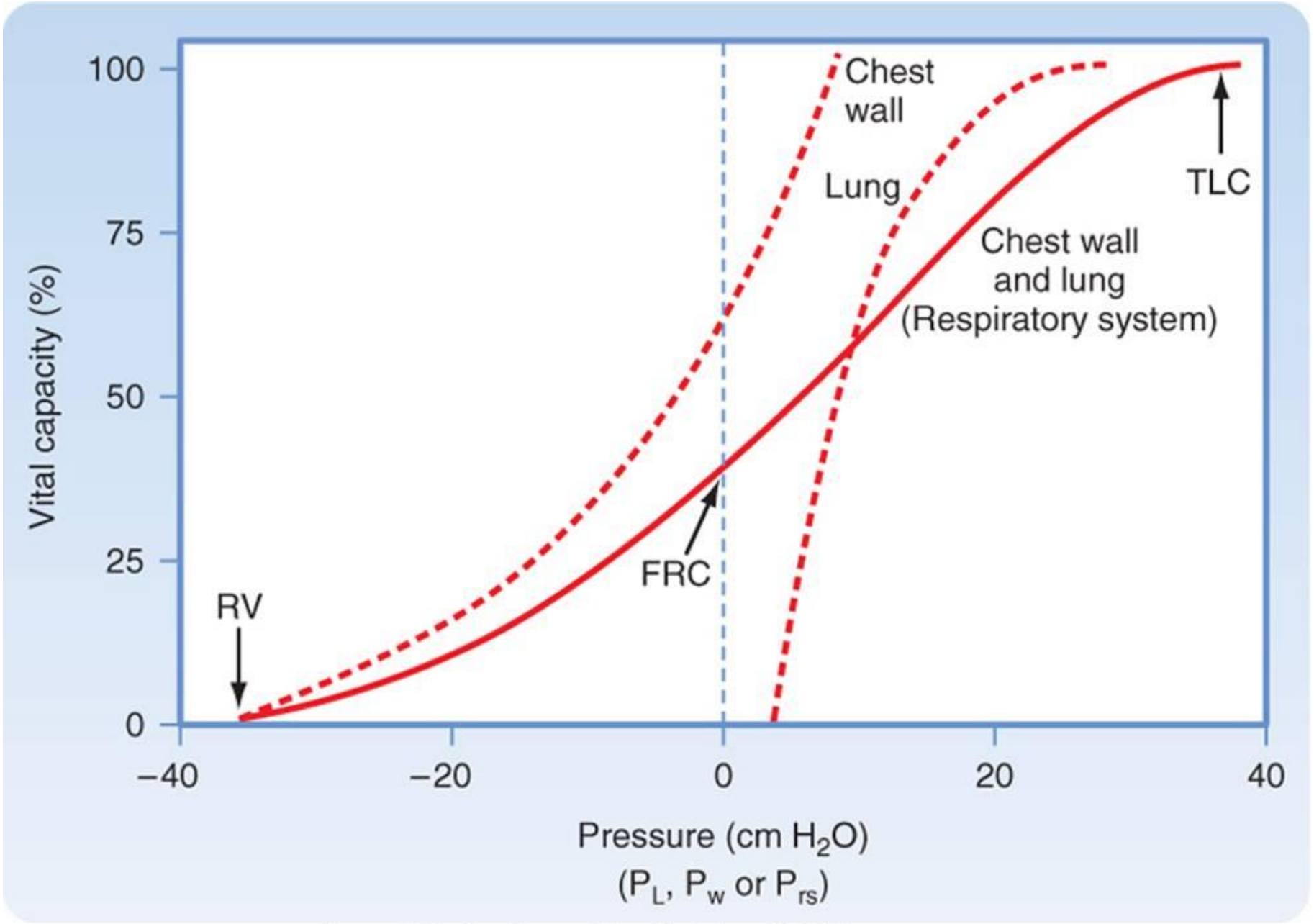

The transmural pressure across the respiratory system at FRC is zero. At TLC, both lung pressure and chest wall pressure are positive, and they both require positive transmural distending pressure. The resting volume of the chest wall is the volume at which the transmural pressure for the chest wall is zero, and it is approximately 60% of TLC. At volumes greater than 60% of TLC, the chest wall is recoiling inward and positive transmural pressure is needed, whereas at volumes below 60% of TLC, the chest wall tends to recoil outward

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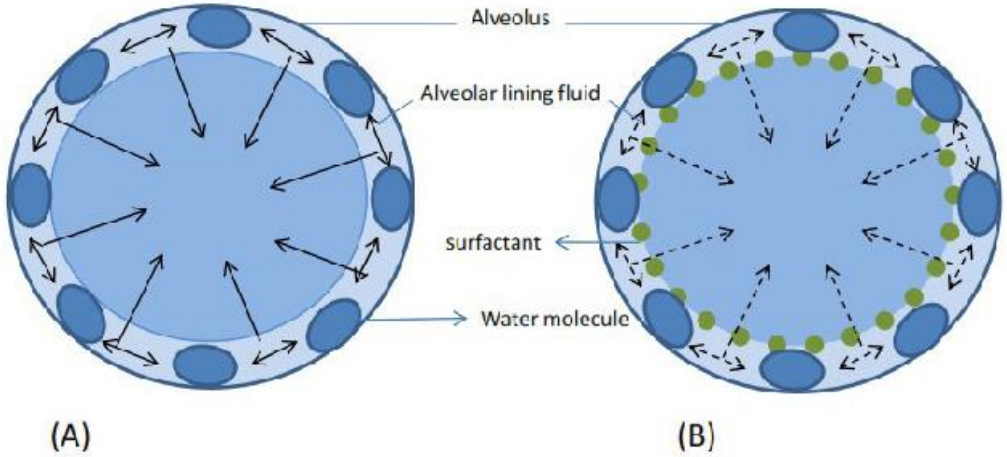
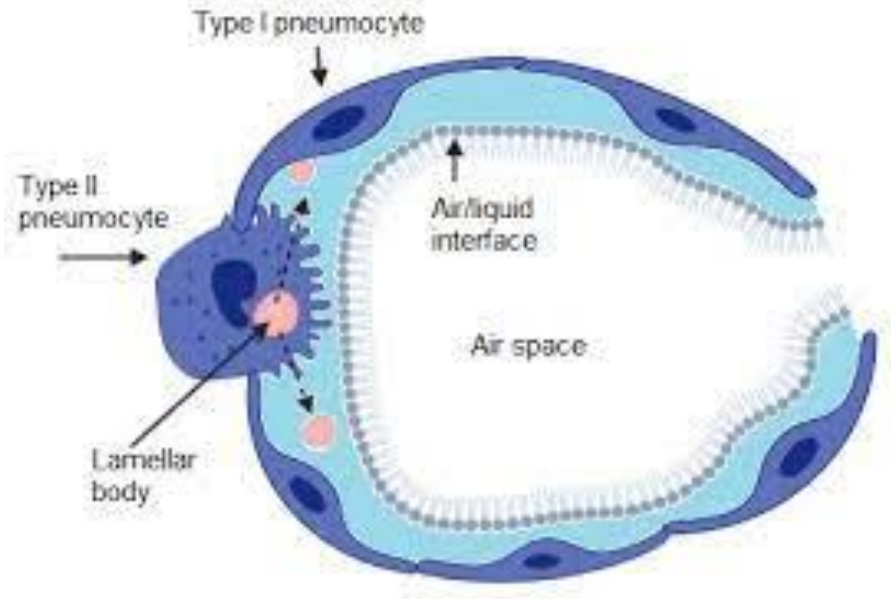
Elastic recoil is determined by two kinds of forces

- **lung compliance** ("distensibility")
  - a measure of the relationship between this retractive force and lung volume (pressure-volume relationship)
  - defined as the change in lung volume brought about by unit change in transpulmonary (intrapleural) pressure (L/kPa)
- **surface tension** produced by the layer of fluid that lines the alveoli
  - determined by the cohesive (binding together) forces between molecules of the same type
    - on the inner surface of the alveoli there is a fluid that can resist lung expansion
    - there would be a lot of surface tension because there is an air-water interface in every alveolus
    - if surface tension remained constant, decreasing r during expiration would increase P and smaller alveolus would empty into large one
  - this collapsing tendency is offset by **pulmonary surfactant** which significantly lowers surface tension





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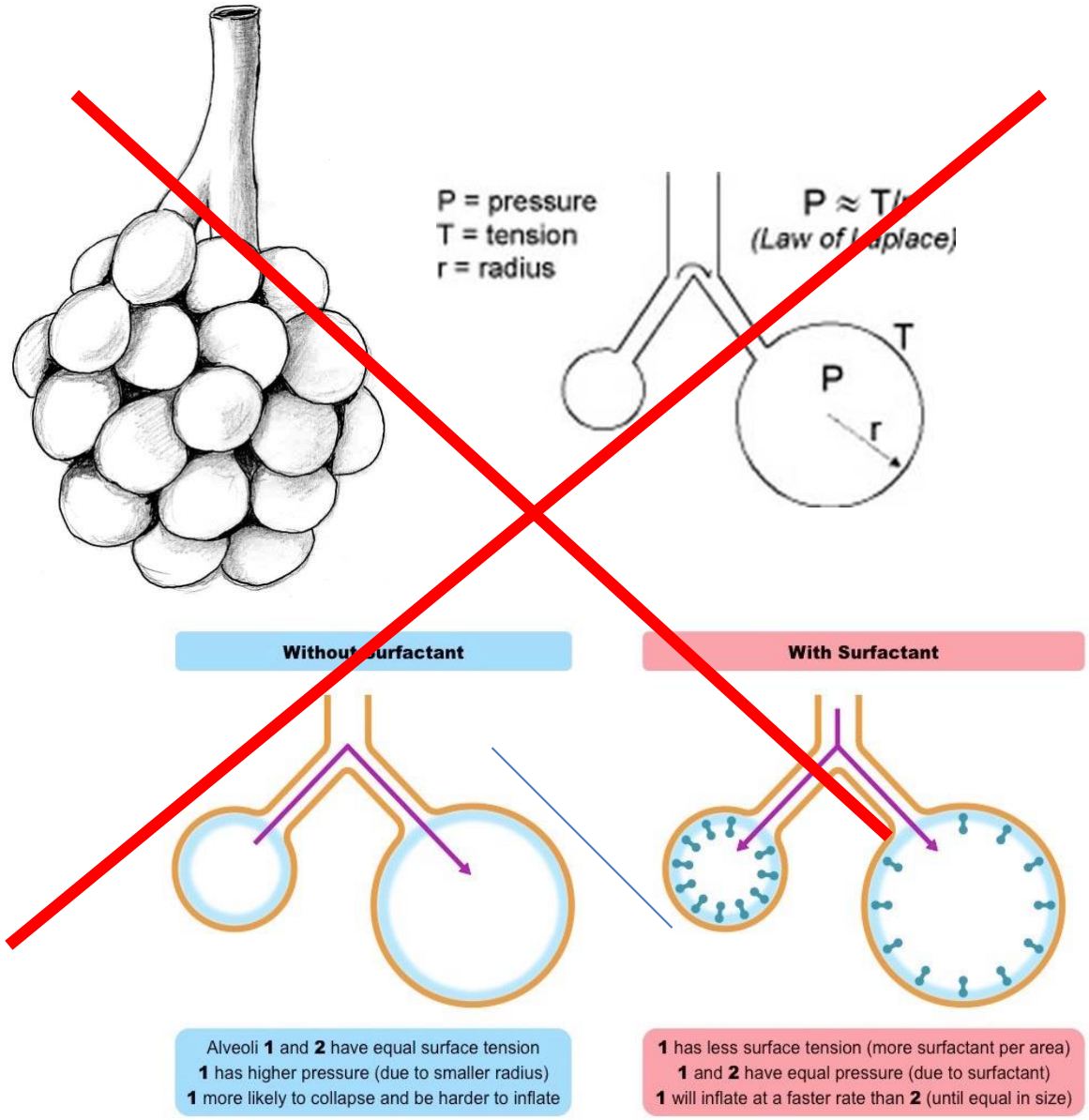
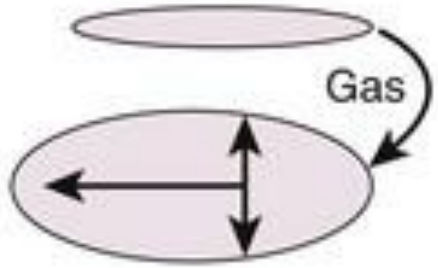
Historical misconception

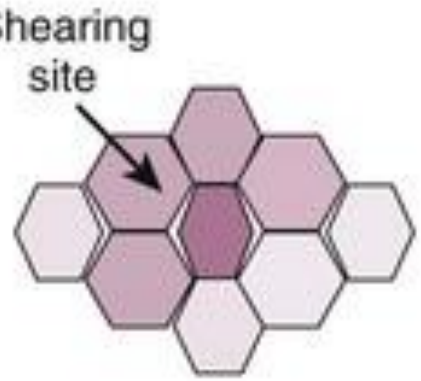


Balloon theory of alveoli



Alveoli *rarely* completely collapse

Alveoli are actually polygons



Alveolar interdependency

Surfactant decreases tension around corners

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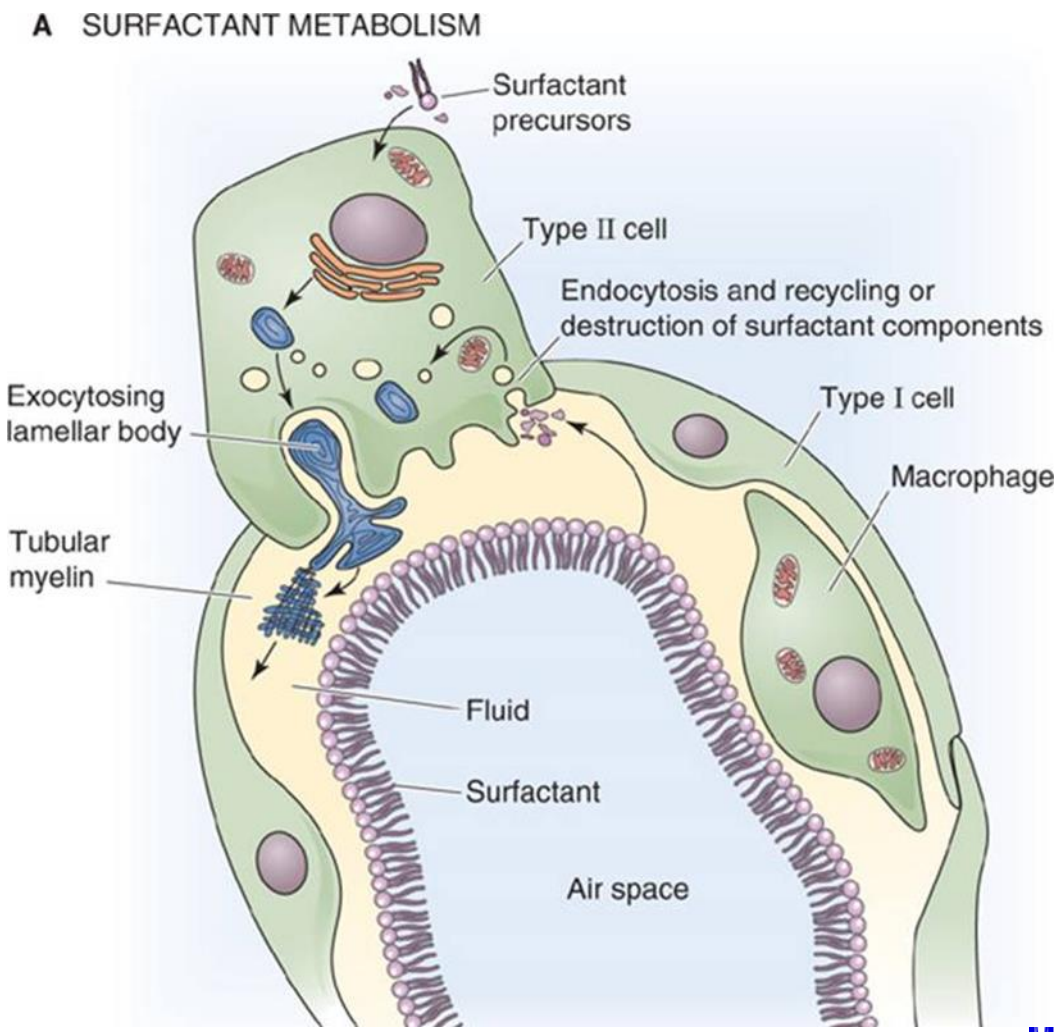
Pulmonary surfactant

- Complex mixture of **lipids and proteins** at the alveolar cell surface (liquid – gas interface) reducing surface tension
  - superficial layer made of phospholipids (dipalmitoyl lecithin)
  - deeper layer (hypophase) made of proteins (SP-A, -B, -C, -D)
- Surfactant maintains lung volume at the end of expiration
- Continually and very rapidly recycles
  - influenced by many hormones incl. glucocorticoids
    - lung maturation in pre-term newborns



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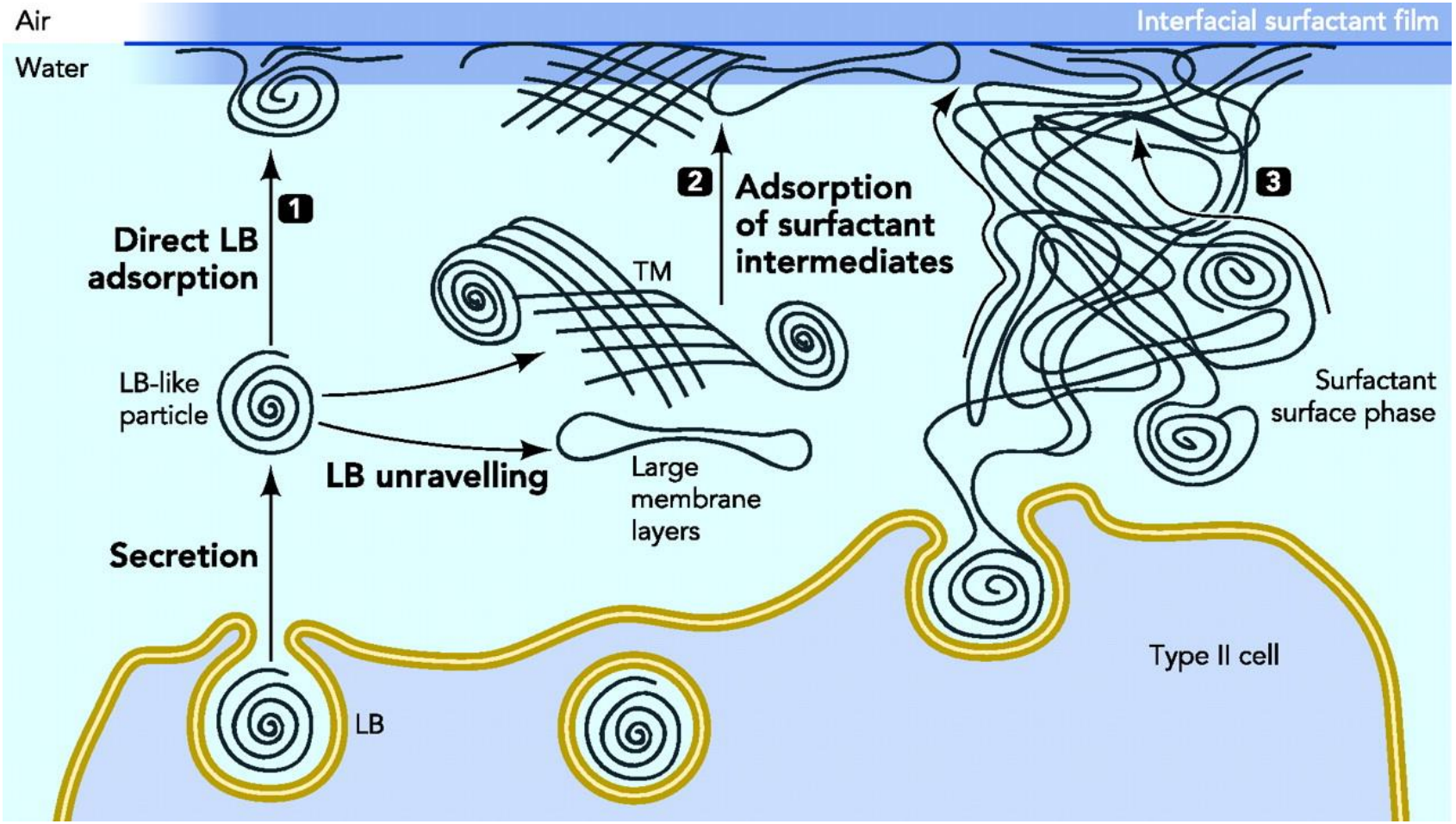
Pulmonary surfactant adsorption to the interface and surface film formation. Processes that may contribute to transport of surface active surfactant species to the interface include 1) direct cooperative transfer of surfactant from secreted lamellar body-like particles touching the interface, 2) unravelling of secreted lamellar bodies to form intermediate structures such as tubular myelin (TM) or large surfactant layers that have the potential to move and transfer large amounts of material to the interface, and 3) rapid movement of surface active species through a continuous network of surfactant membranes, a so-called surface phase, connecting secreting cells with the interface.



Perez-Gil J , Weaver T E Physiology 2010;25:132-141

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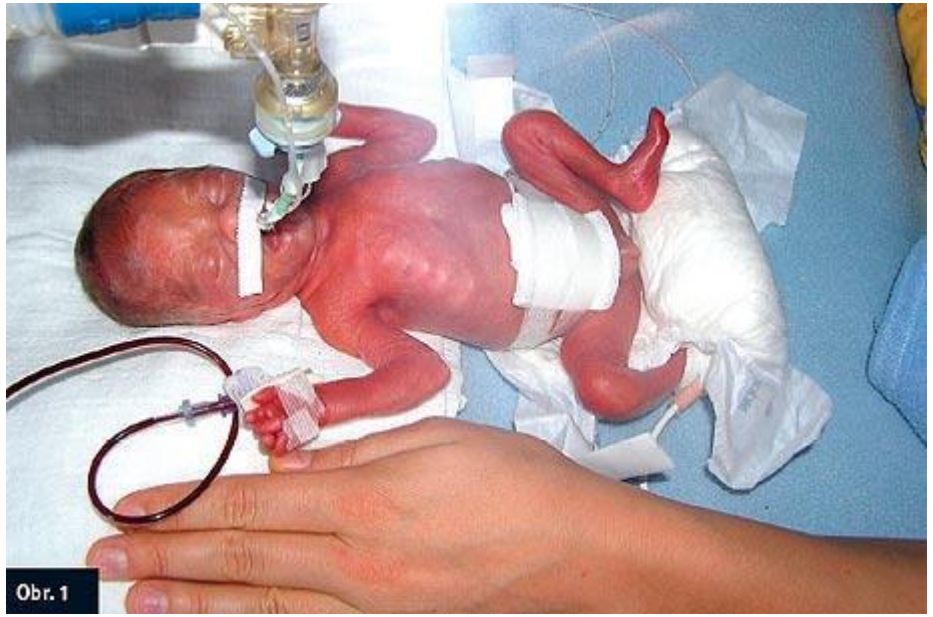
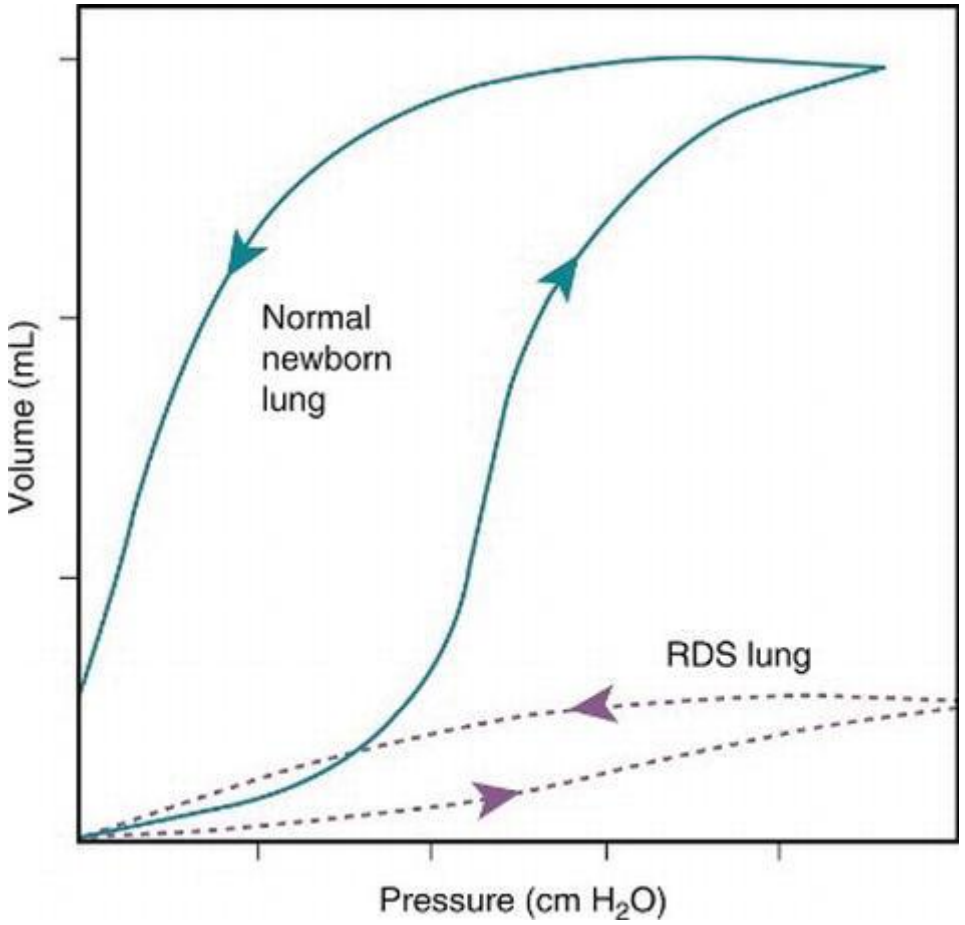
Newborn respiratory distress syndrome (nRDS)





- hyaline membrane syndrome
- surfactant substitution
  - porcine or modified bovine
    - sterilized
  - synthetic
  - next generation
    - recombinant SP proteins
- indication: nRDS
  - less convincing evidence for ARDS, aspiration, pneumonia, …

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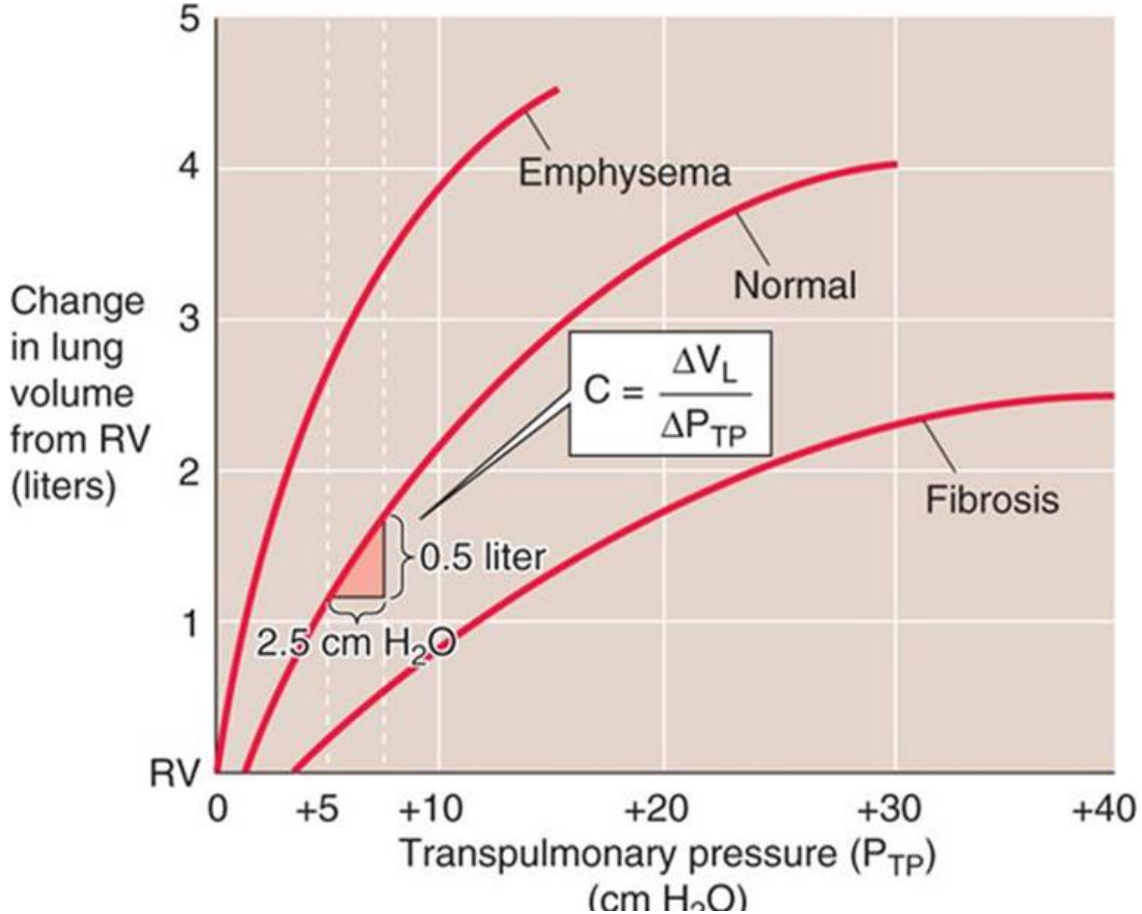
Abnormalities of elastic properties

- change of lung compliance (TLC, FRC, RV)
  - ↑ pulmonary **emphysema**, aging (↑TLC, ↑FRC, ↑RV)
  - ↓ **interstitial disease** (↓TLC, ↓FRC, ↓RV)
    - e.g. pulmonary fibrosis or bronchopneumonia
- lack of surfactant (↓TLC, ↓FRC, ↓RV)
  - infant or adult **respiratory distress syndromes** (IRDS or ARDS, resp.), i.e. tendency of lung to collapse
  - alveolar lung **edema** (damages/dilutes surfactant)
- diseases that affect the movement of the thoracic cage and diaphragm
  - marked obesity
  - diseases of the thoracic spine
    - ankylosing spondylitis and kyphoscoliosis
  - neuropathies
    - e.g. the Guillain-Barre syndrome)
  - injury to the phrenic nerves (spine C3-C5)
  - myasthenia gravis



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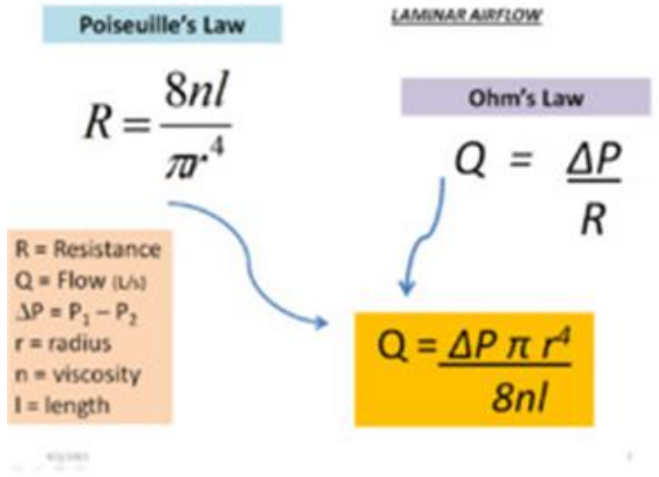
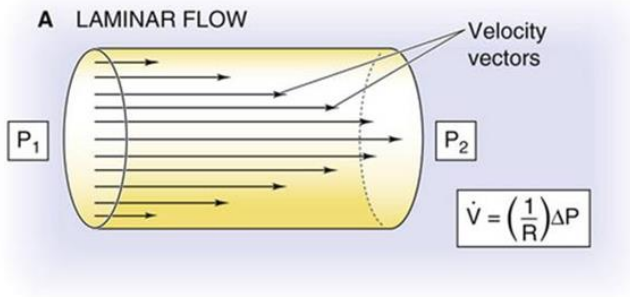
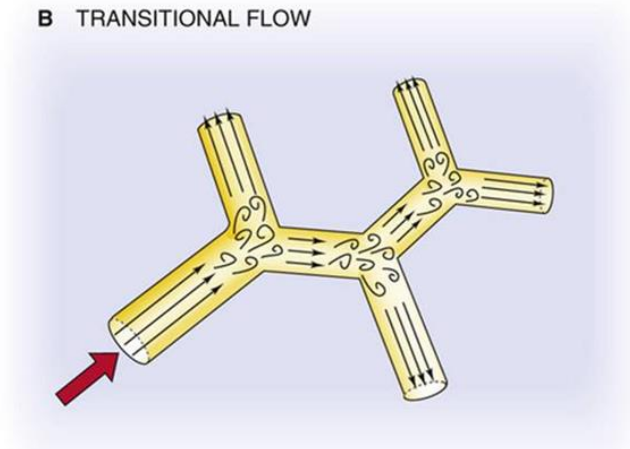
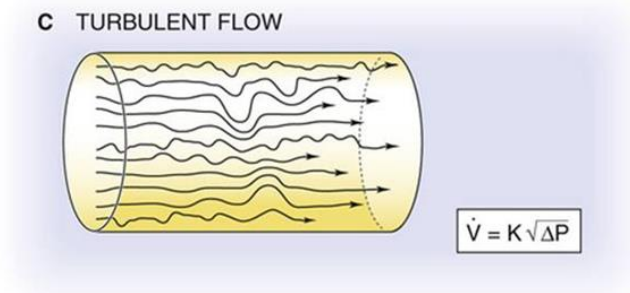
(ad 2) Airway (dynamic) resistance

- Poiseuille's law for pressure states that the pressure is
  - directly proportional to flow, tube length, and viscosity
  - and it is inversely proportional to tube radius
- Overcoming increased resistance requires **forced expiration**









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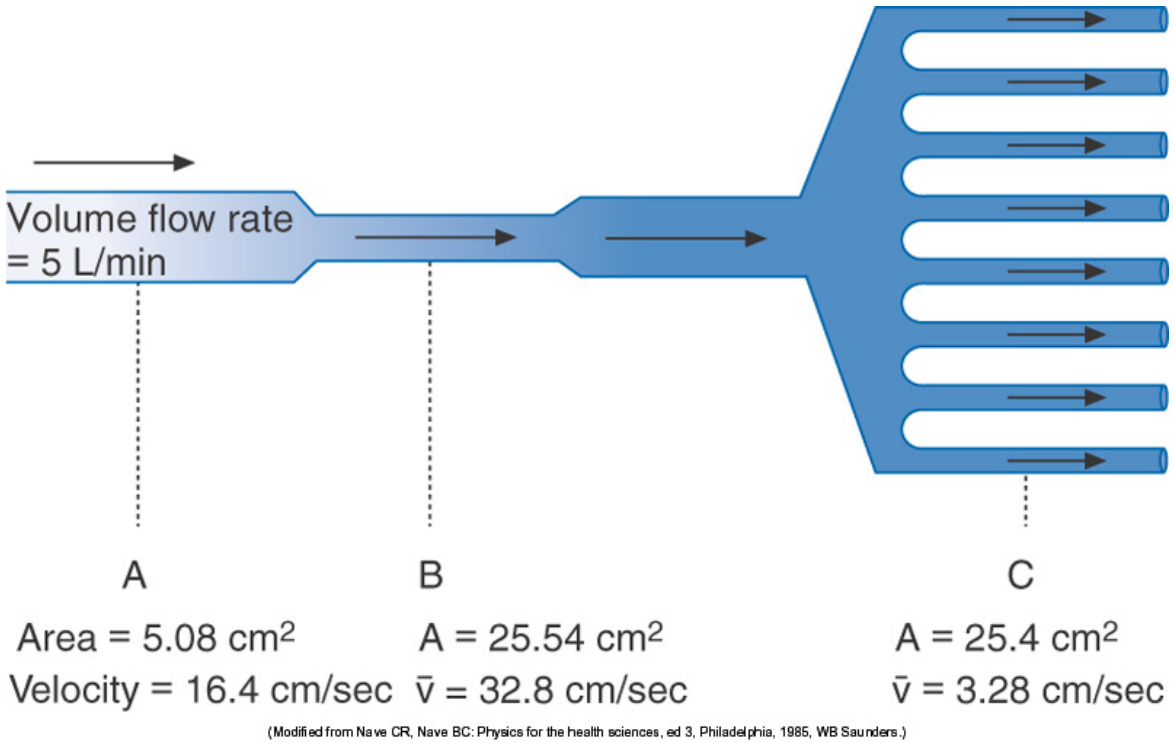
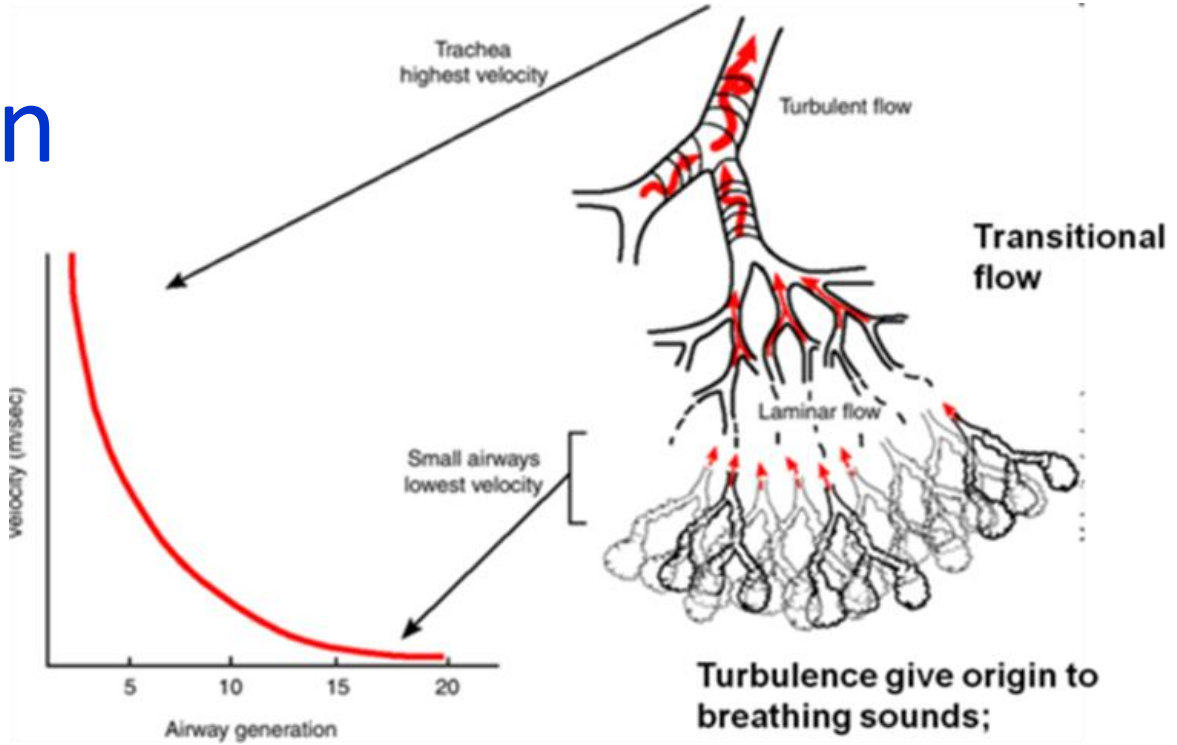
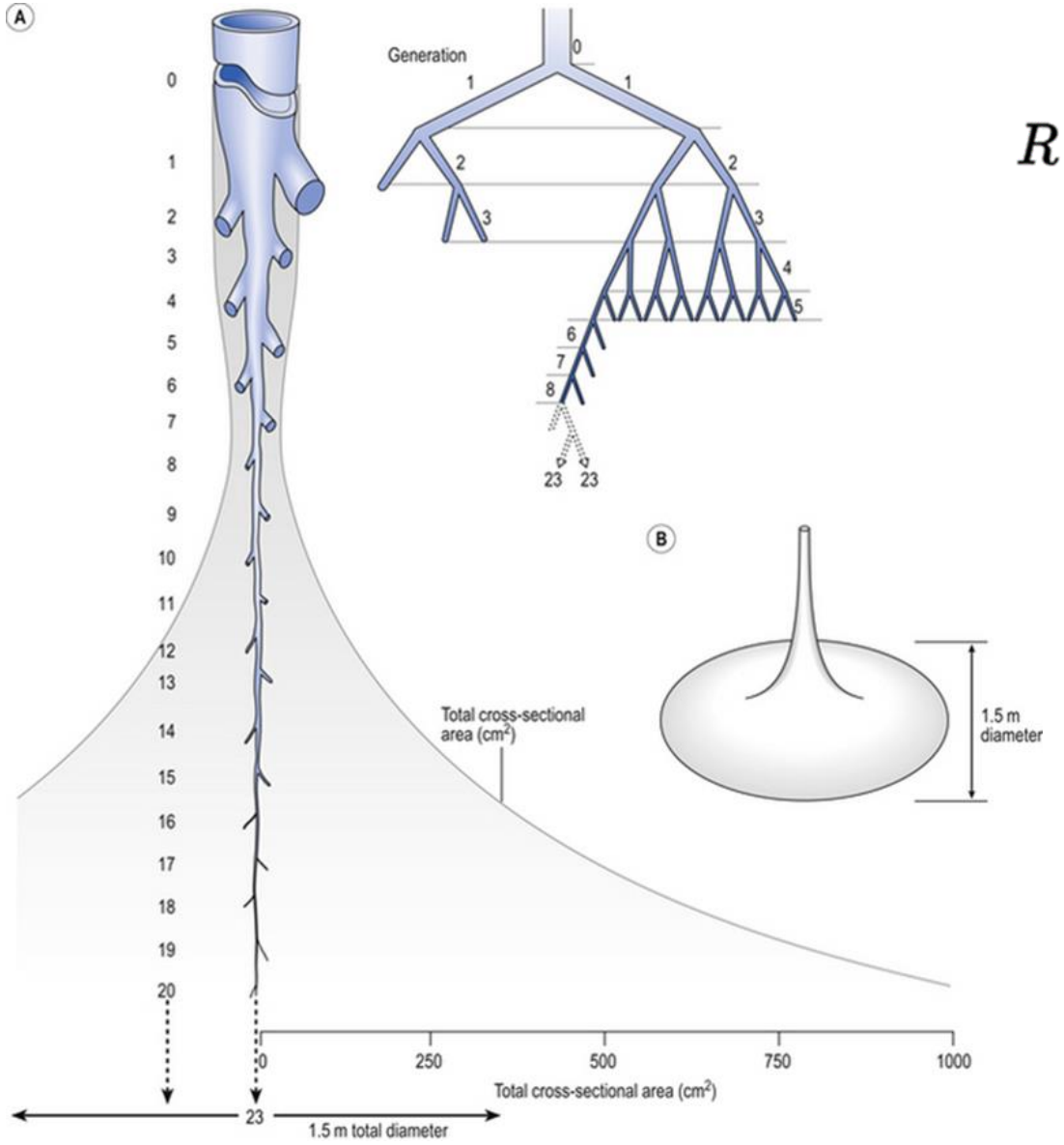
Airflow velocity and pattern



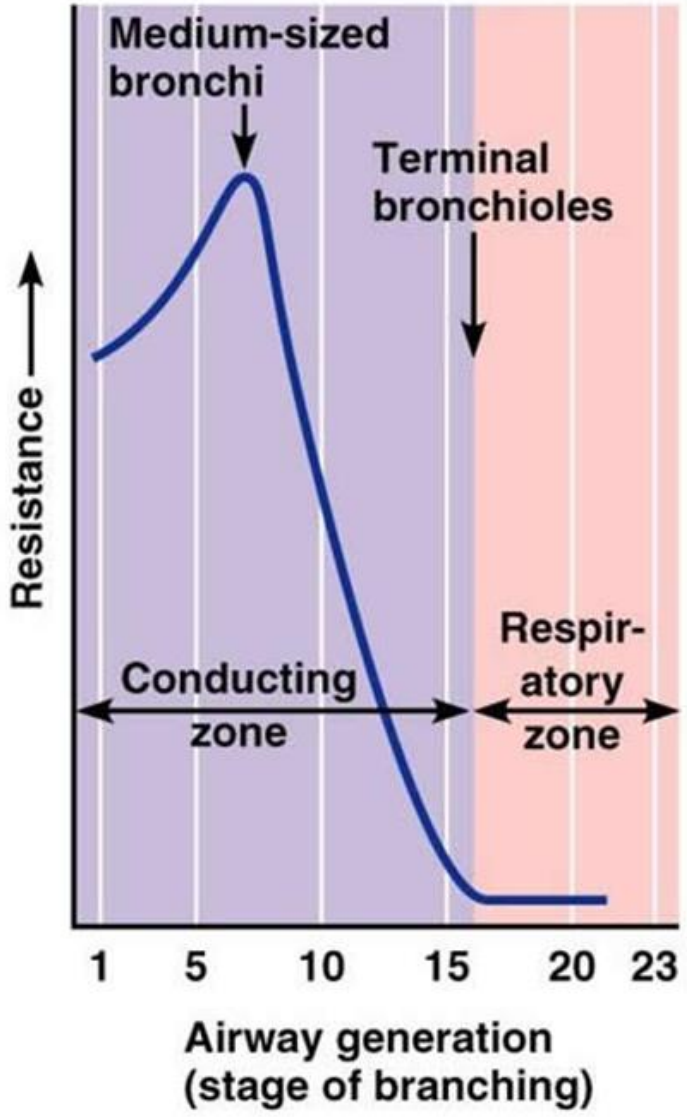
(Modified from Nave CR, Nave BC: Physics for the health sciences, ed 3, Philadelphia, 1985, WB Saunders.)



Airflow – where is the highest resistance?



$$R = \frac{8\eta l}{\pi r^4}$$



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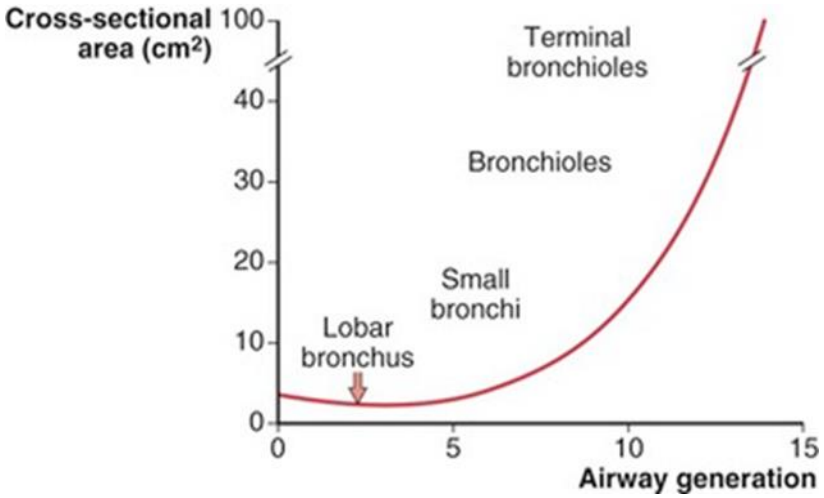
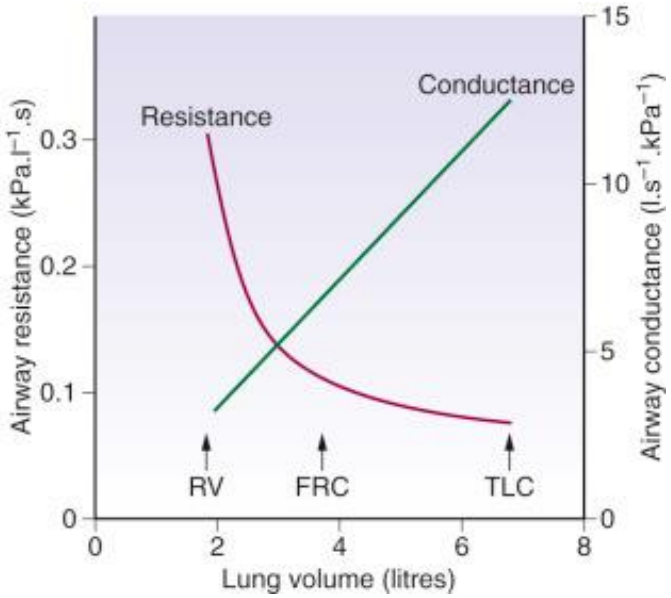
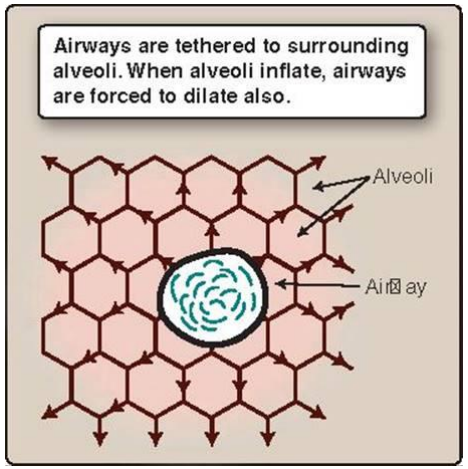
Airflow resistance





- From the trachea to the periphery, the airways become smaller in size (although greater in number)
  - **the cross-sectional area available for airflow increases as the total number of airways increases**
  - the flow of air is greatest in the trachea and slows progressively towards the periphery (as the velocity of airflow depends on the ratio of flow to cross-sectional area)
    - in the terminal airways, gas flow occurs solely by diffusion
- The **resistance to airflow** is very low (0.1-0.2 kPa/L in a normal tracheobronchial tree), **steadily increasing from the small to the large airways**
- Airway tone is under the control of the autonomic nervous system
  - bronchomotor tone is maintained by **vagal efferent nerves**
  - many **adrenoceptors** on the surface of bronchial muscles respond **to circulating catecholamines**
    - sympathetic nerves do not directly innervate them!
- Airway resistance is also **related to lung volumes**
  - because airways are 'tethered' by alveoli (i.e. pulled open by radial traction)
  - visible on bronchoscopy
  - patients with obstruction benefit from breathing in high lung volumes



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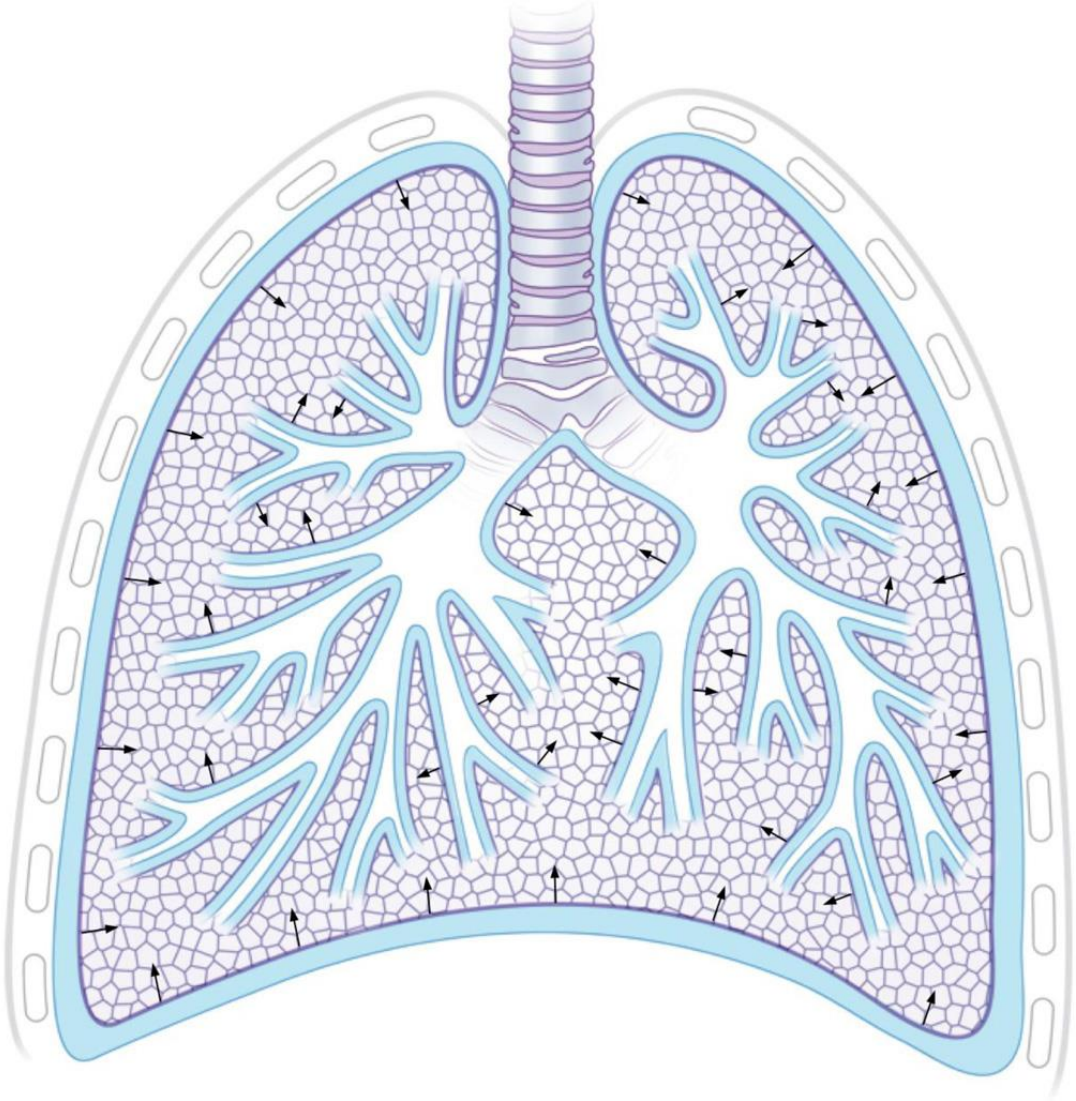
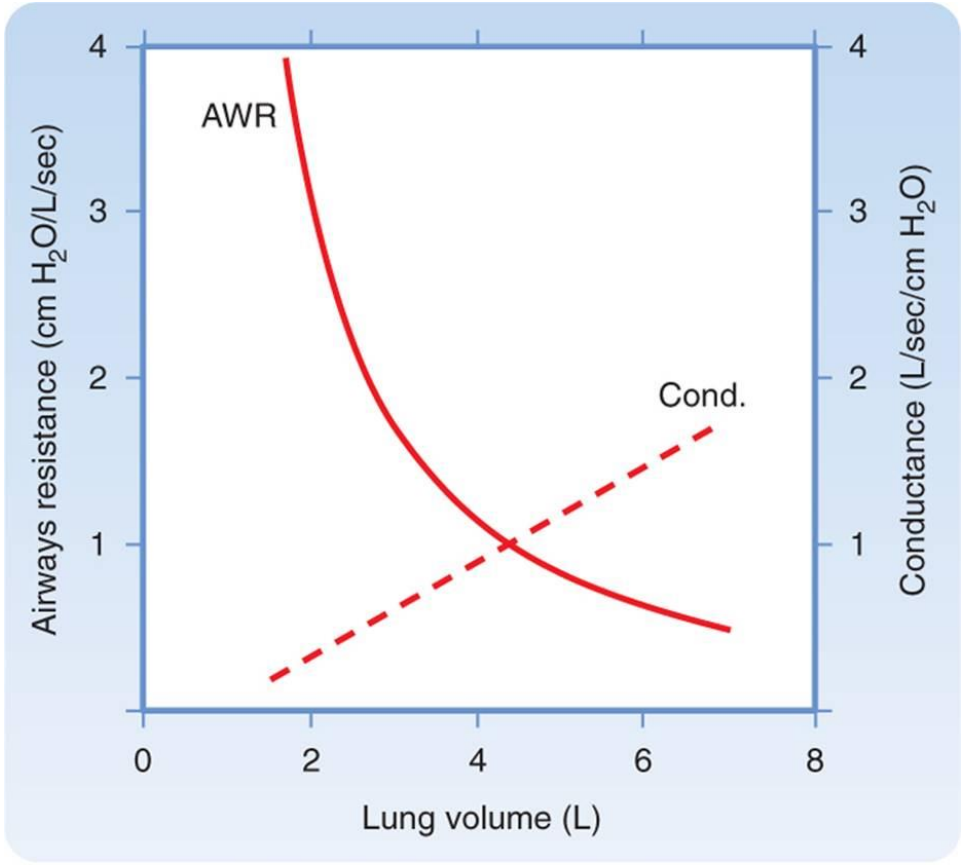
Airway-Parenchymal Interdependence





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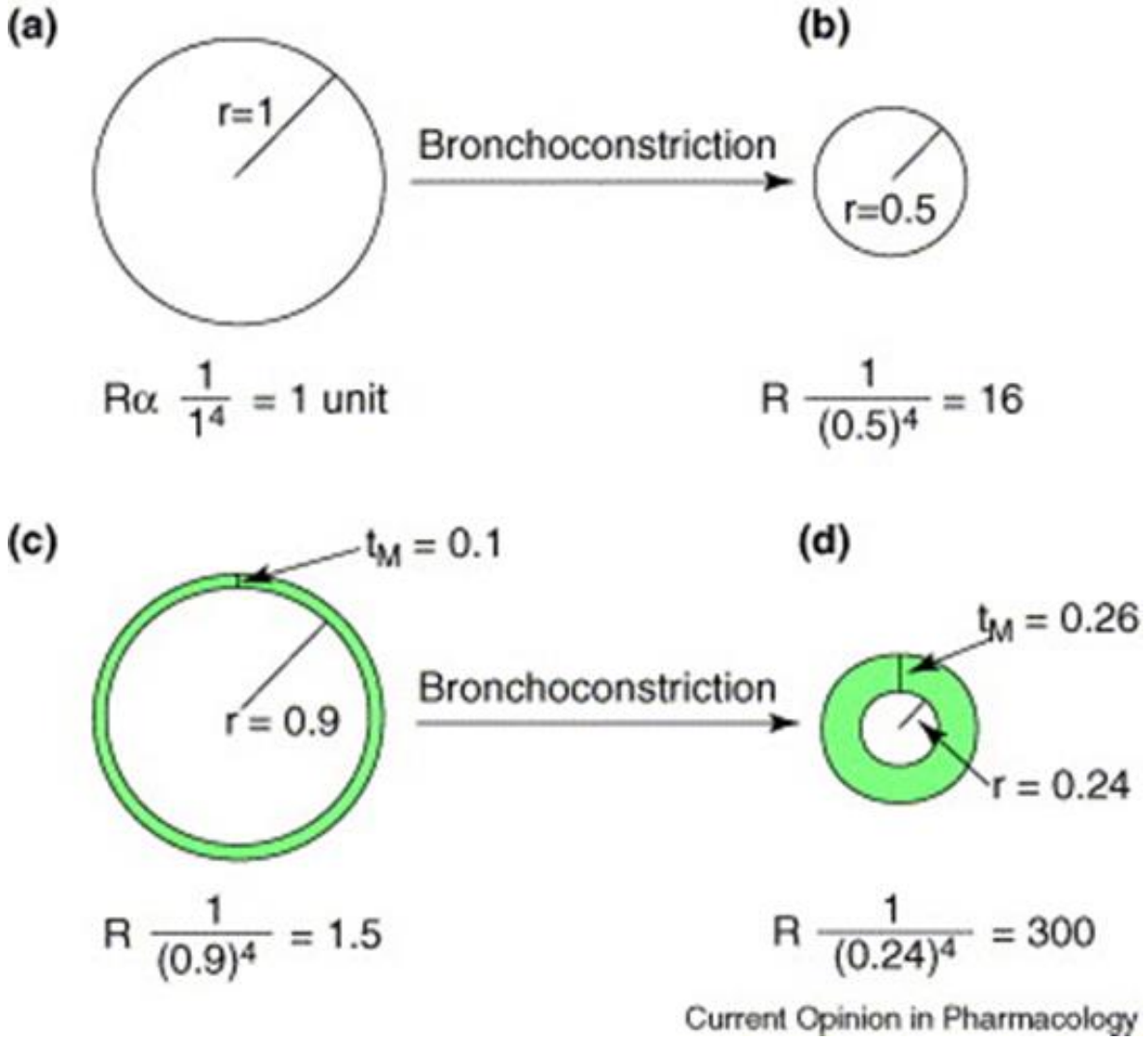
Airflow resistance – effect of changed airway diameter



$$R = \frac{8\eta l}{\pi r^4}$$

- theoretical amplifying effect of luminal mucus on airflow resistance in asthma
  - **(a)** According to Poiseuille's law, resistance to flow (R) is proportional to the reciprocal of the radius (r) raised to the fourth power.
  - **(b)** Without luminal mucus, bronchoconstriction to reduce the airway radius by half increases airflow resistance 16-fold.
  - **(c)** A small increase in mucus thickness (t_M), which reduces the radius of the airway by only one-tenth, has a negligible effect on airflow in the unconstricted airway (compare with panel **a**).
  - **(d)** With bronchoconstriction, the same amount of luminal mucus markedly amplifies the airflow resistance of this airway

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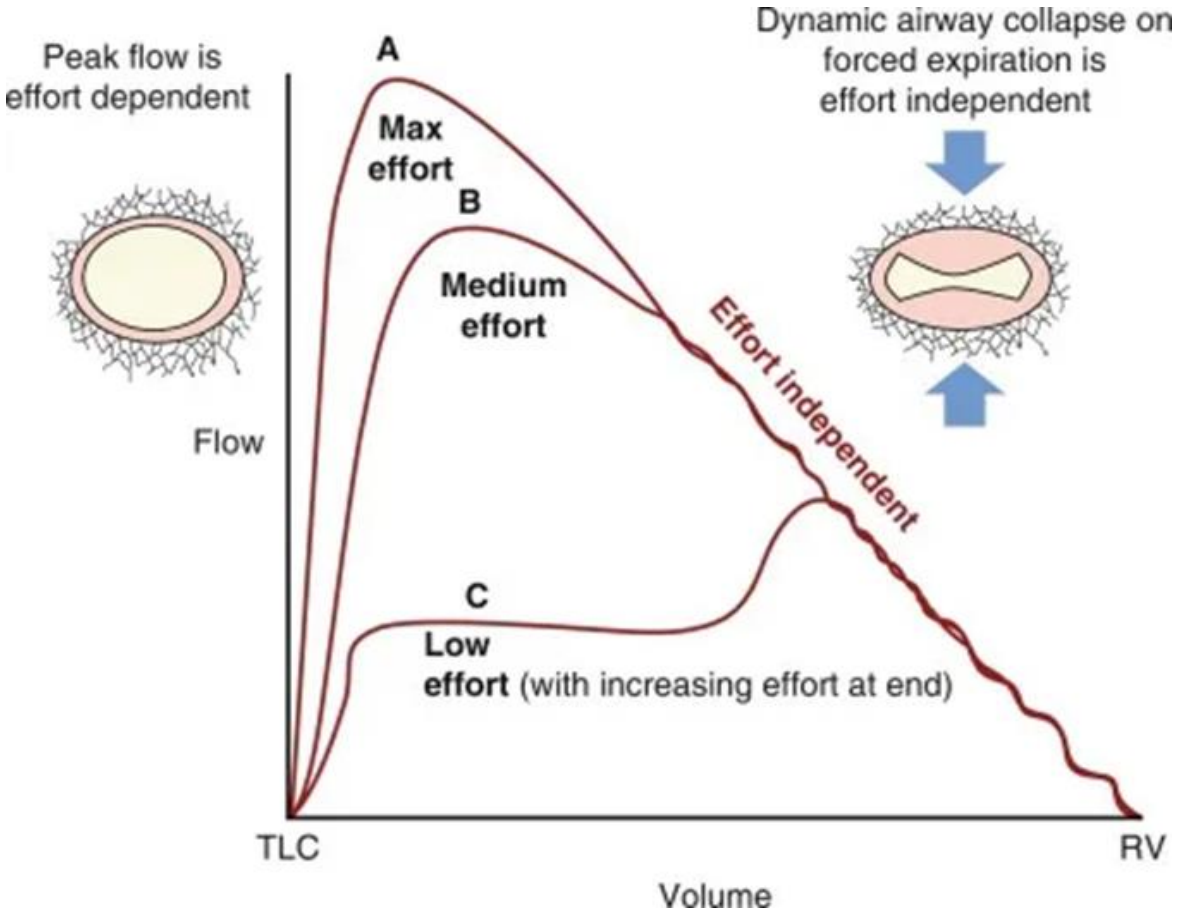
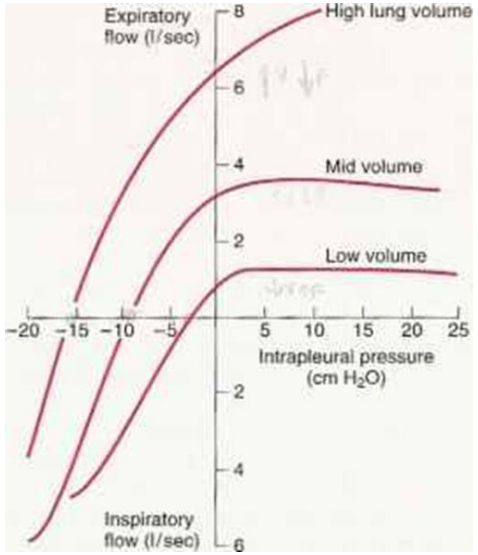
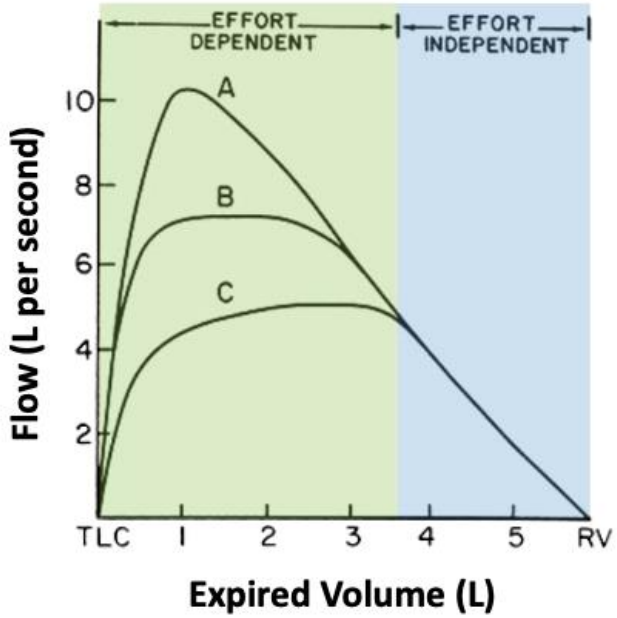
The difference between quiet and forced expiration

for the most part of expiration, the flow rate is effort-independent





Flow = (Palv-Patm)/airway resistance



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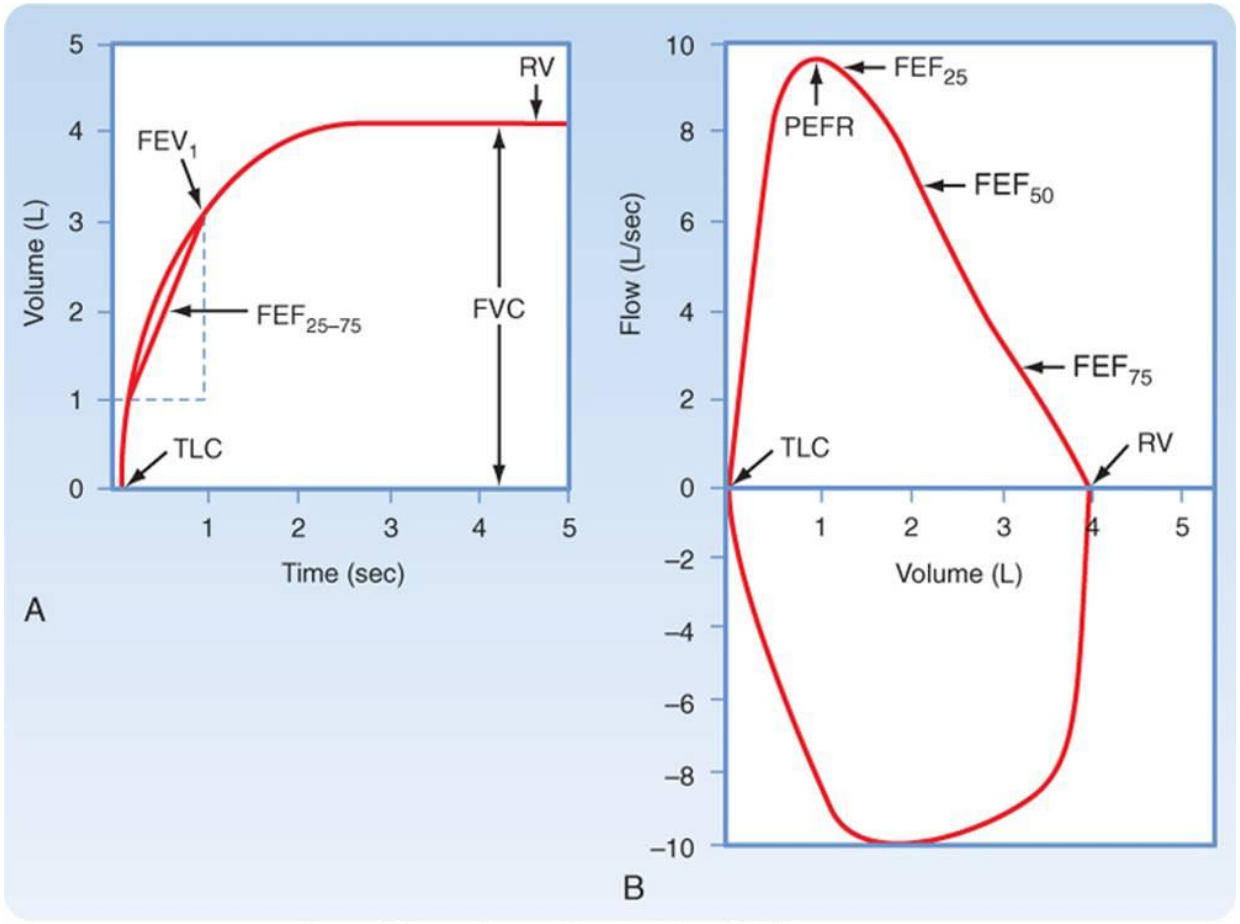
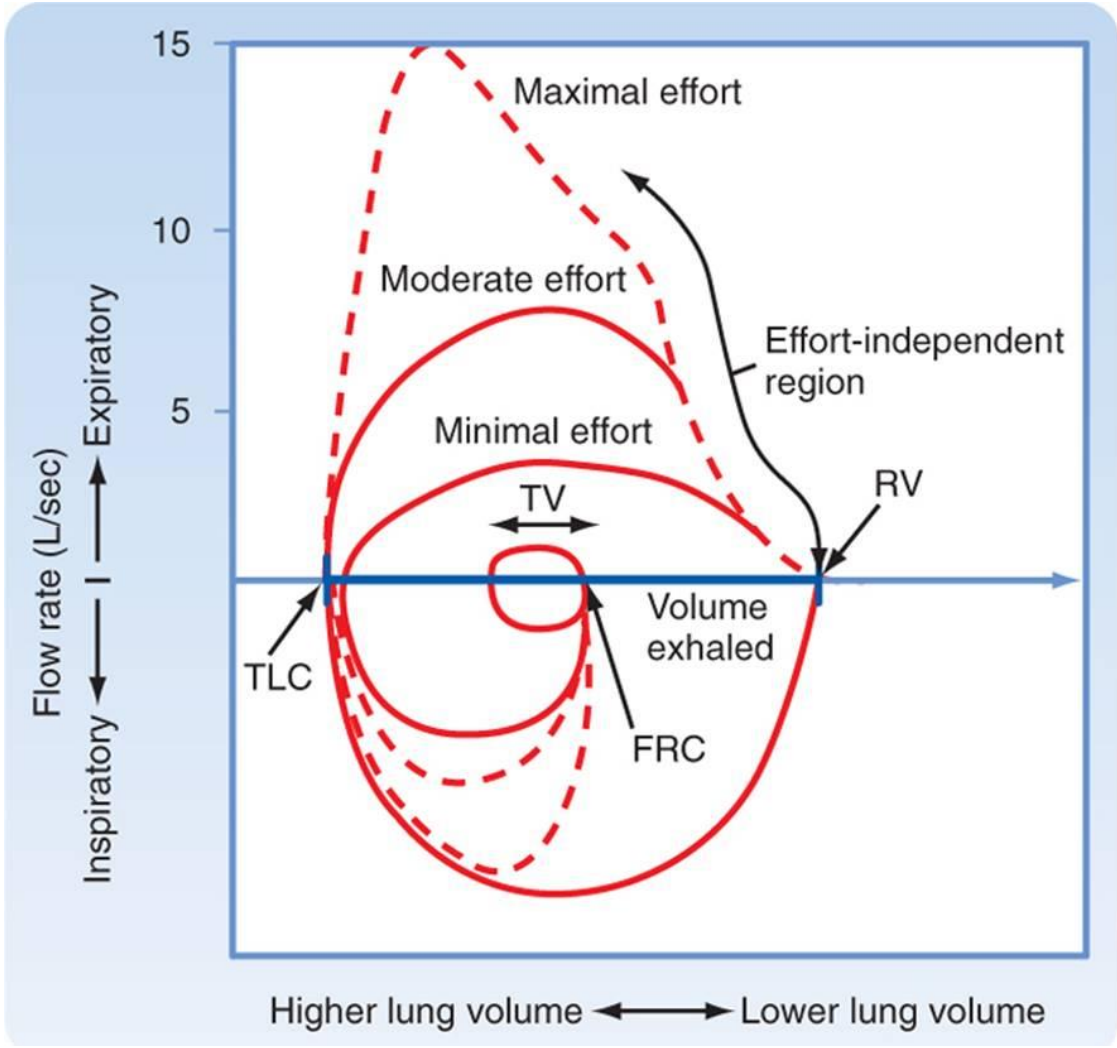
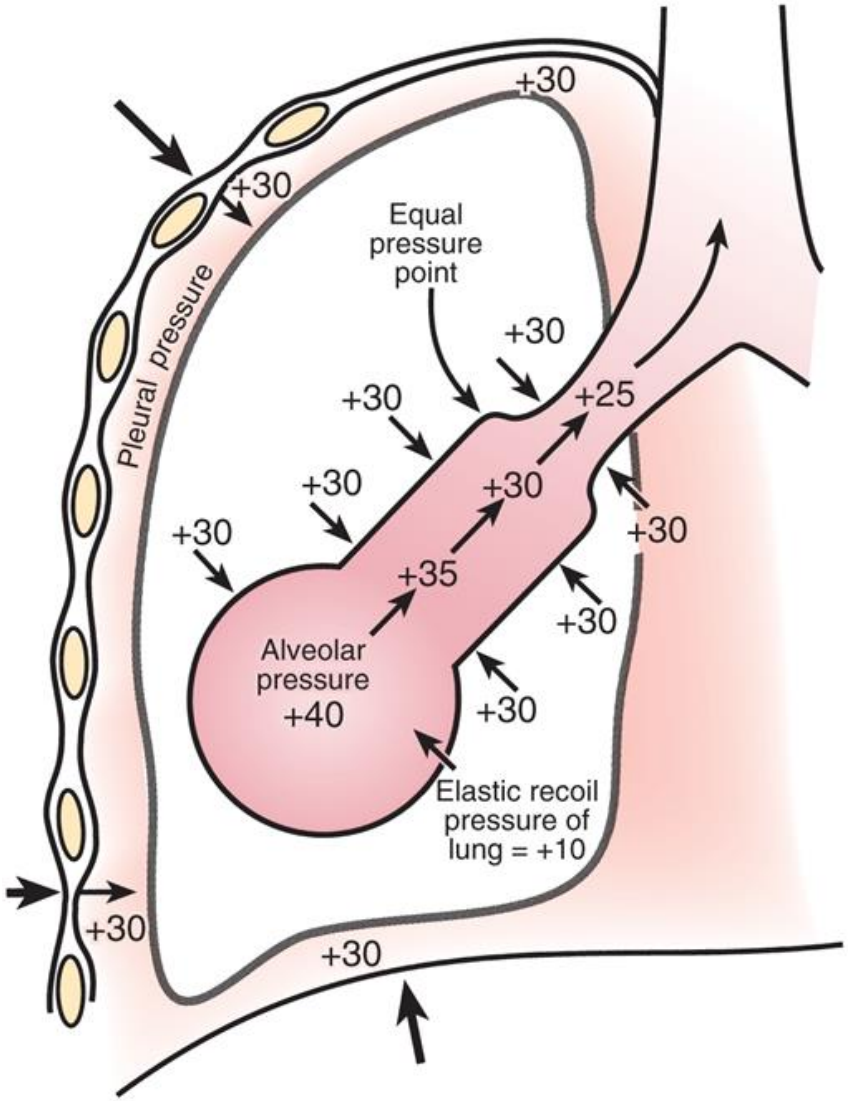
Flow-volume loop: peak inspiratory and initial expiratory flow rates are dependent on effort, whereas expiratory flow rates later in expiration are independent of effort





Why is expiratory flow limited?



- In forced expiration, the driving pressure raises both the P_{ALV} and the P_{PL}
  - between the alveolus and the mouth, a point will occur (C) where the airway pressure will equal the intrapleural pressure, and airway compression will occur
    - **equal pressure point**
  - however, this equal pressure point and event. compression of the airway is not fixed during the entire expiration (as the lung volume decreases)
  - initially, it does not existsince in the absence of lung disease, the equal pressure point occurs in airways that contain cartilage, and thus they resist collapse
  - later, the equal pressure point moves closer to the alveoli causing transient occlusion of the airway
    - this, however, results in an increase in pressure behind it (i.e. upstream) and this raises the intra-airway pressure so that the airways open and flow is restored
  - the airways thus tend to vibrate at this point of **'dynamic airway compression'**

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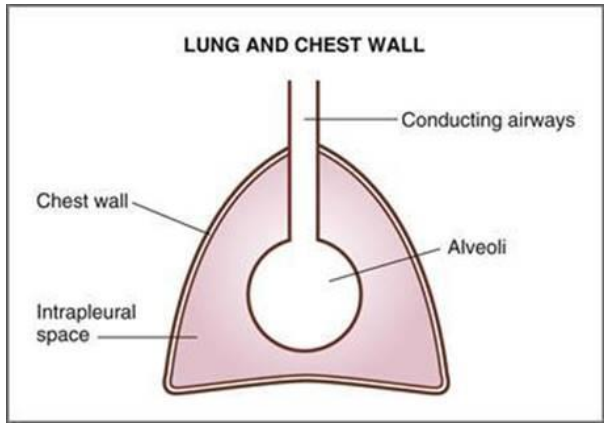
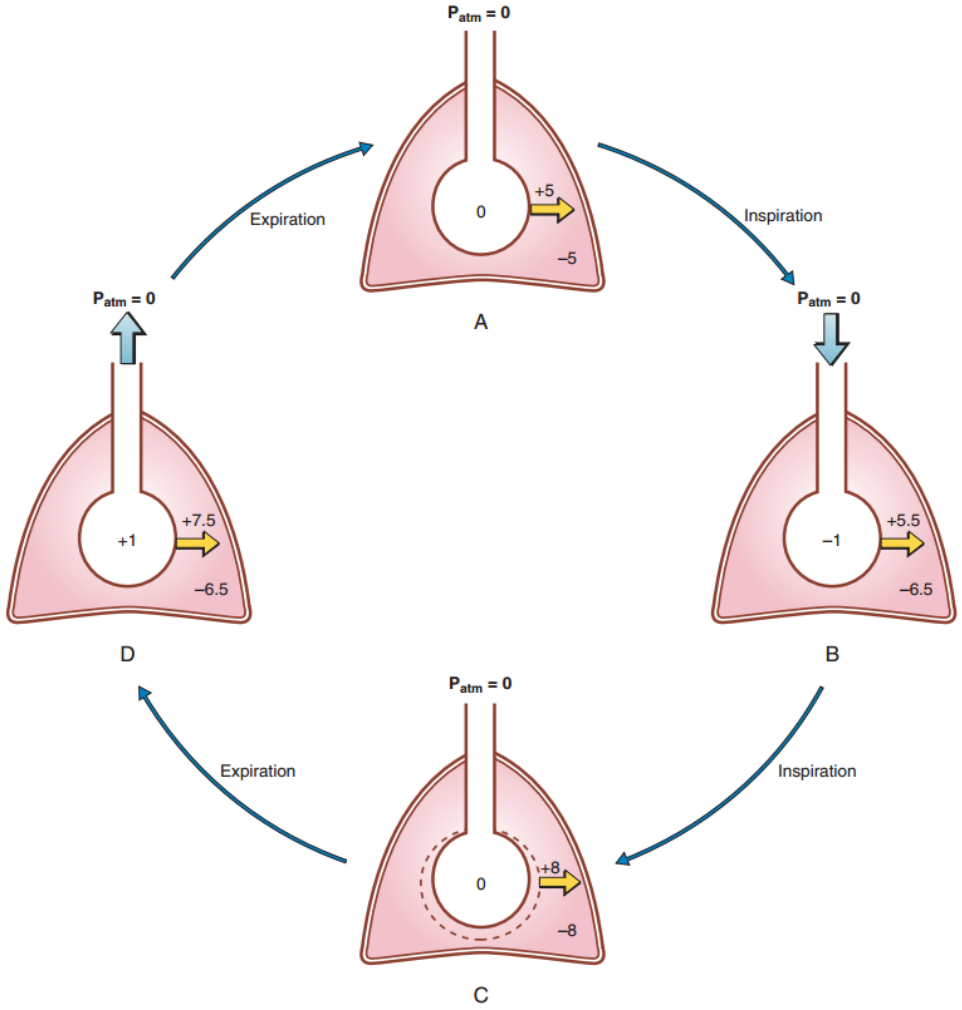
Mechanism of dynamic compression in forced expiration



Pressures, in cm H_2O, are shown at different points in the breathing cycle, atmospheric pressure is zero, and values for alveolar and intrapleural pressure are given in the appropriate spaces. The *yellow arrows* show the direction and magnitude of the **transmural pressure** across the lungs. By convention, **transmural pressure is calculated as alveolar pressure minus intrapleural pressure. If transmural pressure is positive, it is an expanding pressure on the lung and the yellow arrow points outward**.

Normally, **expiration** is a passive process. Alveolar pressure becomes positive (higher than atmospheric pressure) because the elastic forces of the lungs compress the greater volume of air in the alveoli. When alveolar pressure increases above atmospheric pressure (D), air flows out of the lungs and the volume in the lungs returns to FRC. The volume expired is the tidal volume. At the end of expiration (A), all volumes and pressures return to their values at rest and the system is ready to begin the next breathing cycle.



During inspiration, the diaphragm contracts, causing the volume of the thorax to increase. As lung volume increases, the pressure in the lungs must decrease. (Boyle's law) Halfway through inspiration (B), alveolar pressure falls below atmospheric pressure (−1 cm H_2O). The pressure gradient between the atmosphere and the alveoli drives airflow into the lung. Air flows into the lungs until, at the end of inspiration (C), alveolar pressure is once again equal to atmospheric pressure; the pressure gradient between the atmosphere and the alveoli has dissipated, and airflow into the lungs ceases. During inspiration, intrapleural pressure becomes even more negative than at rest. There are two explanations for this effect: (1) As lung volume increases, the elastic recoil of the lungs also increases and pulls more forcefully against the intrapleural space, and (2) airway and alveolar pressures become negative. Together, these two effects cause the intrapleural pressure to become more negative, or approximately −8 cm H_2O at the end of inspiration. The extent to which intrapleural pressure changes during inspiration can be used to estimate the dynamic compliance of the lungs.

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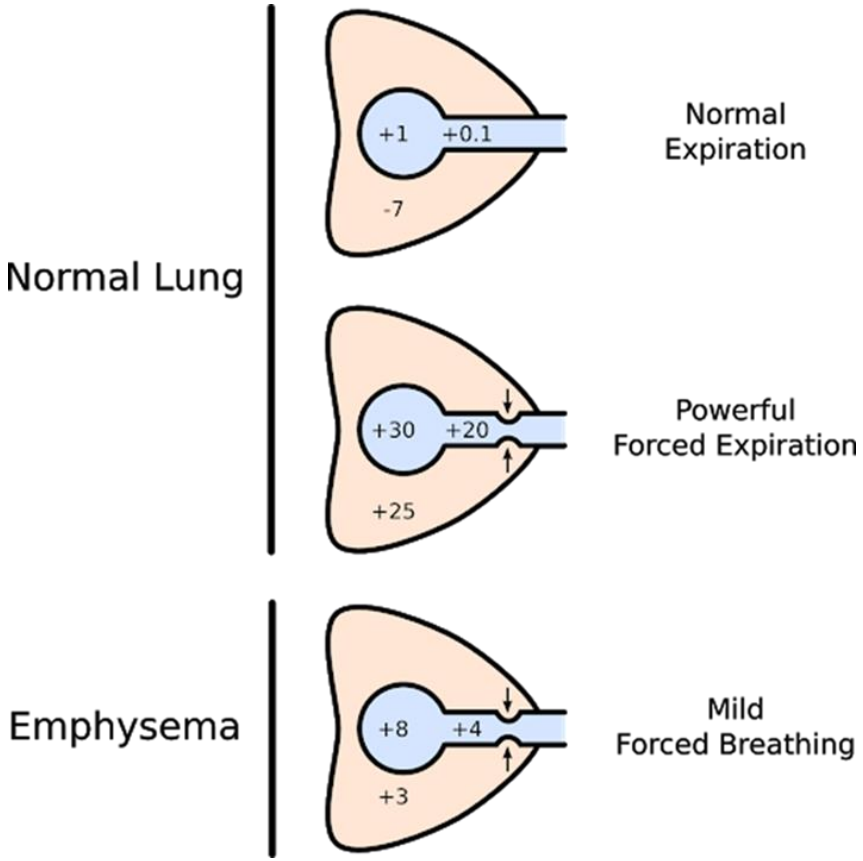
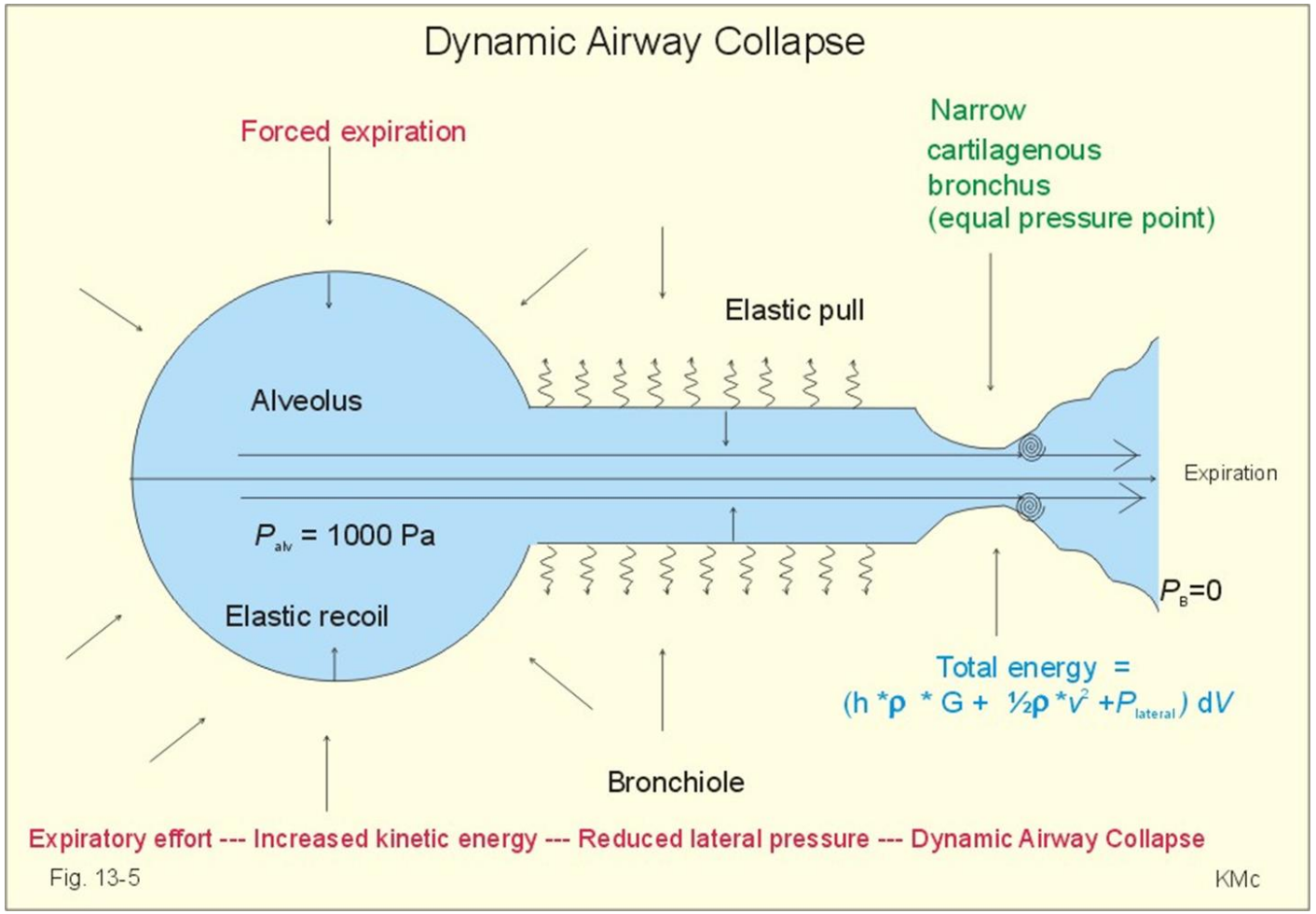
EPP and dynamic compression/collapse of airways





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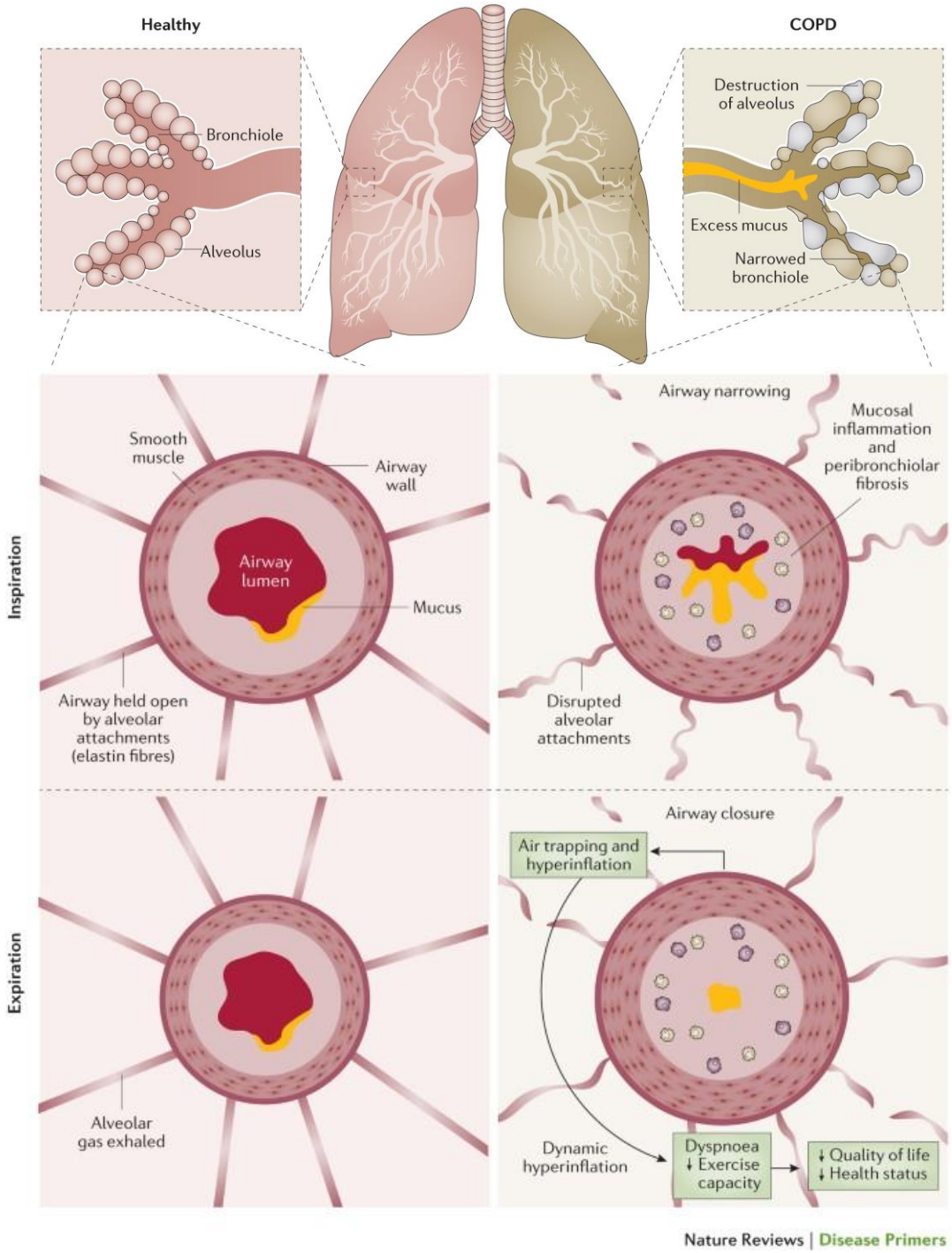

EPP and dynamic compression/collapse of airways

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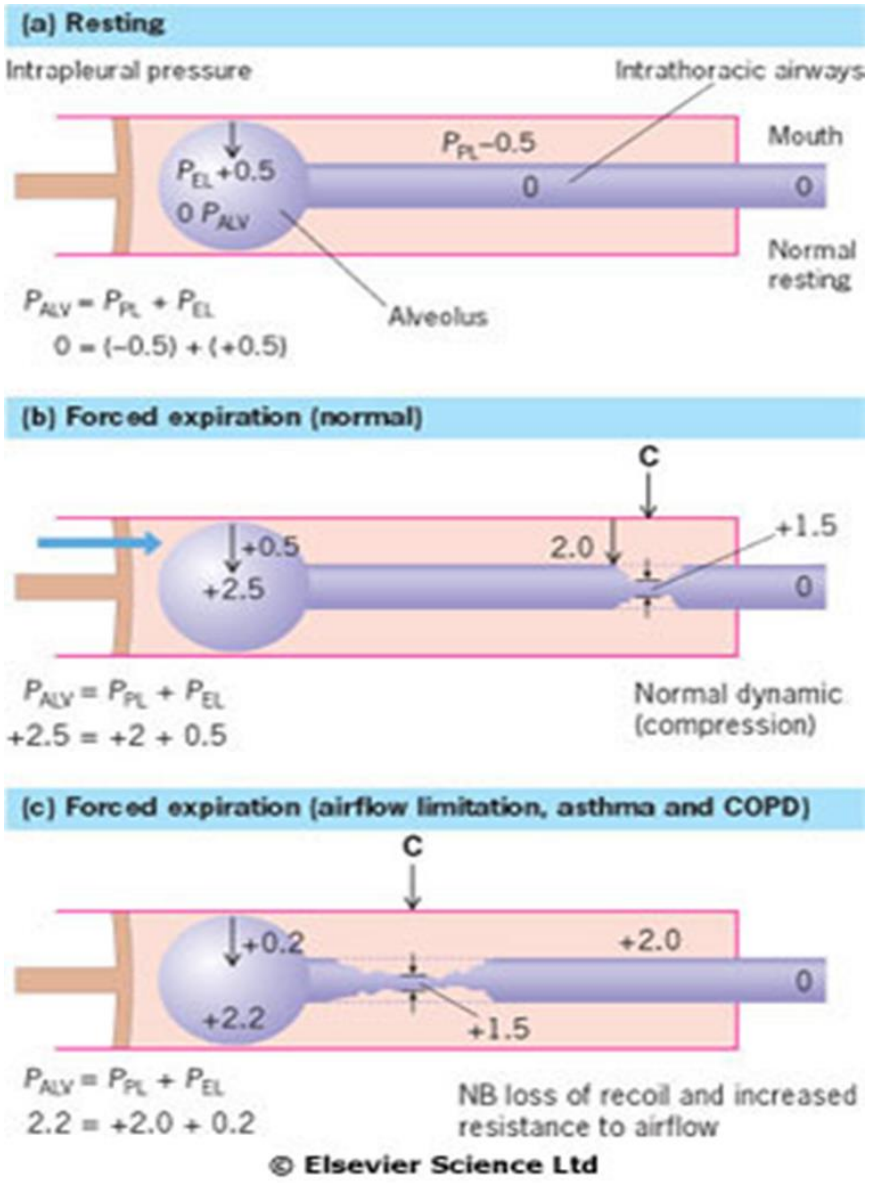
Dynamic compression in various situations



- The respiratory system is represented as a piston with a single alveolus and the collapsible part of the airways within the piston
  - C, compression point; PALV, alveolar pressure; PEL, elastic recoil pressure; PPL, pleural pressure.
  - (a) at rest at functional residual capacity
  - (b) forced expiration in normal subjects
  - (c) forced expiration in a patient with COPD

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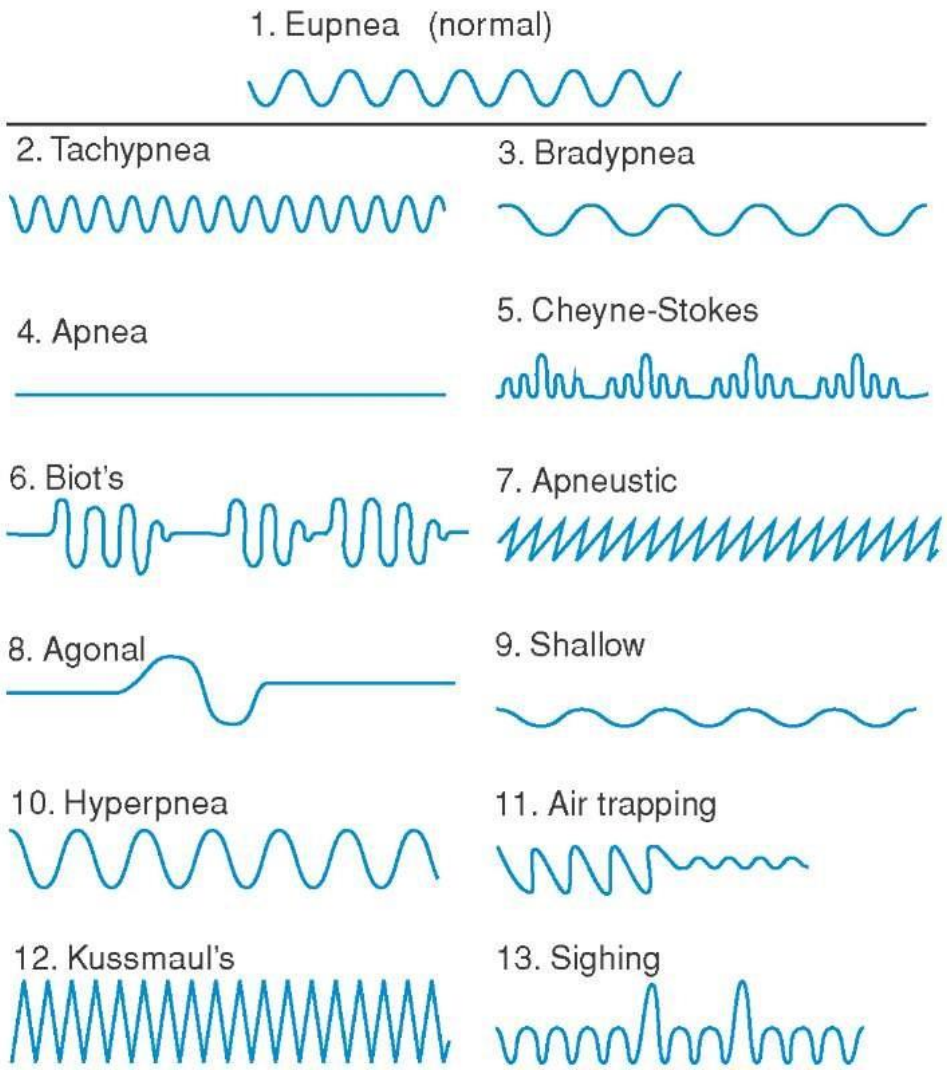
Eupnoea vs. abnormal breathing pattern

- eupnoea
  - $f \times V_T$ = 12-18/min × 500 mL
- pathology according to fervency, volume and preferred position of the subjects
  - tachypnea × hypopnea
  - orthopnea × platypnea × trepopnea,
  - dyspnea
  - apnea



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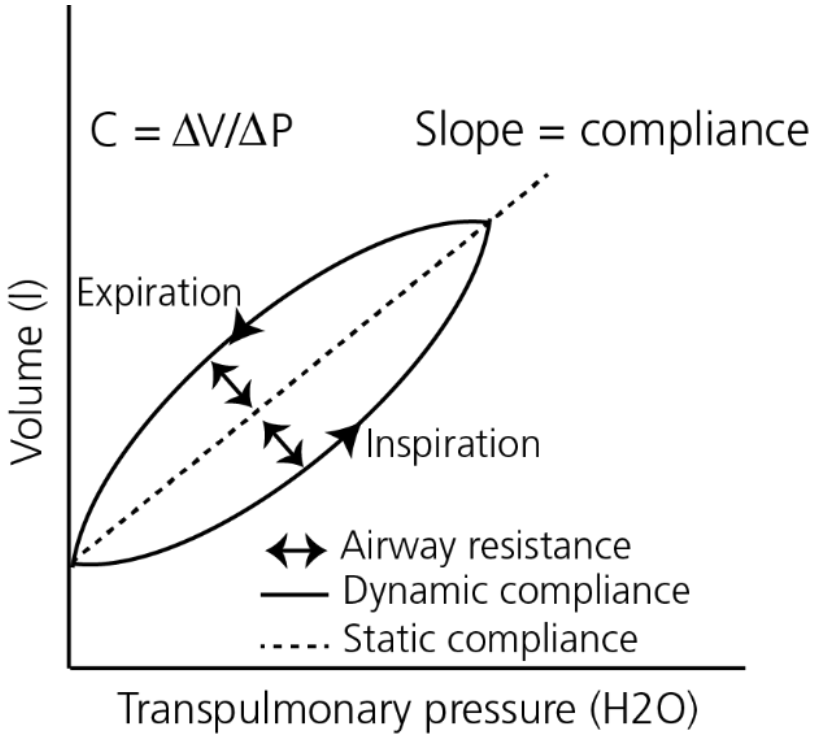
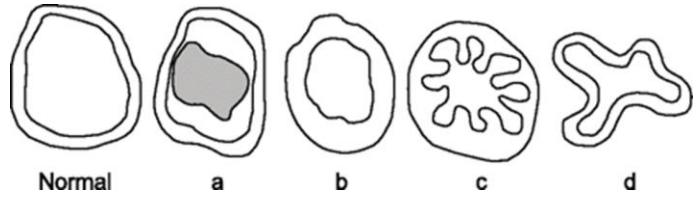
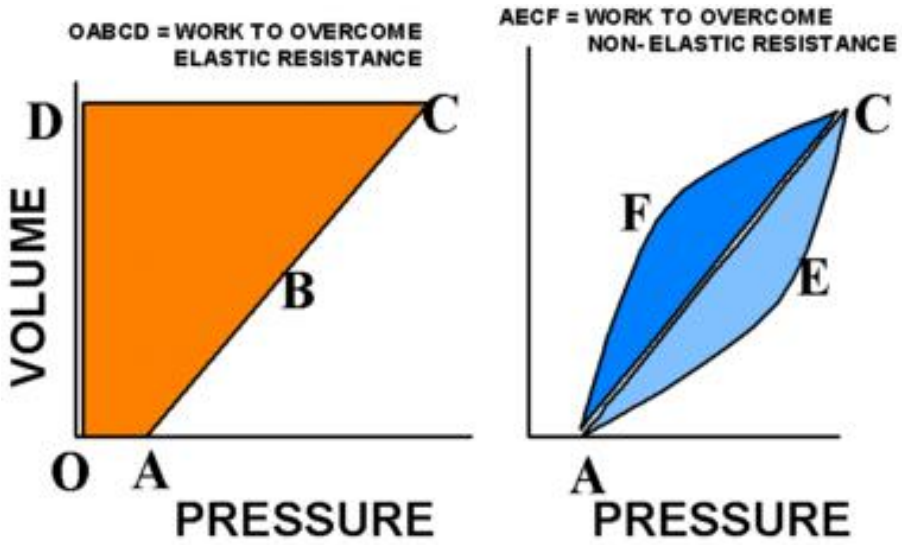
Both types of airway resistance influence work of breathing

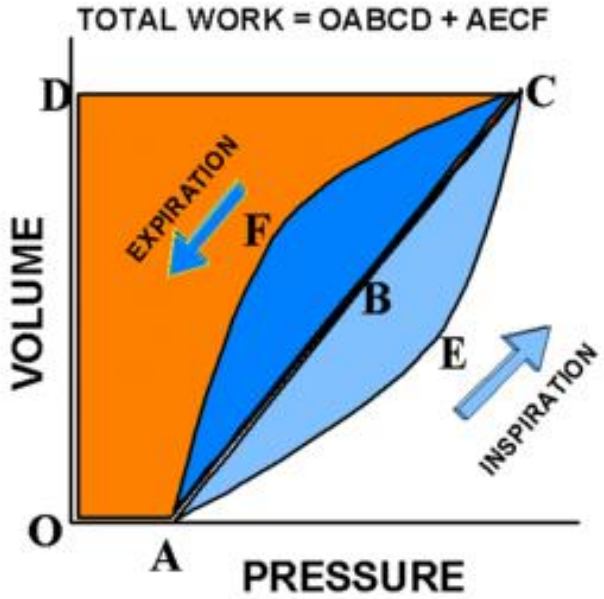


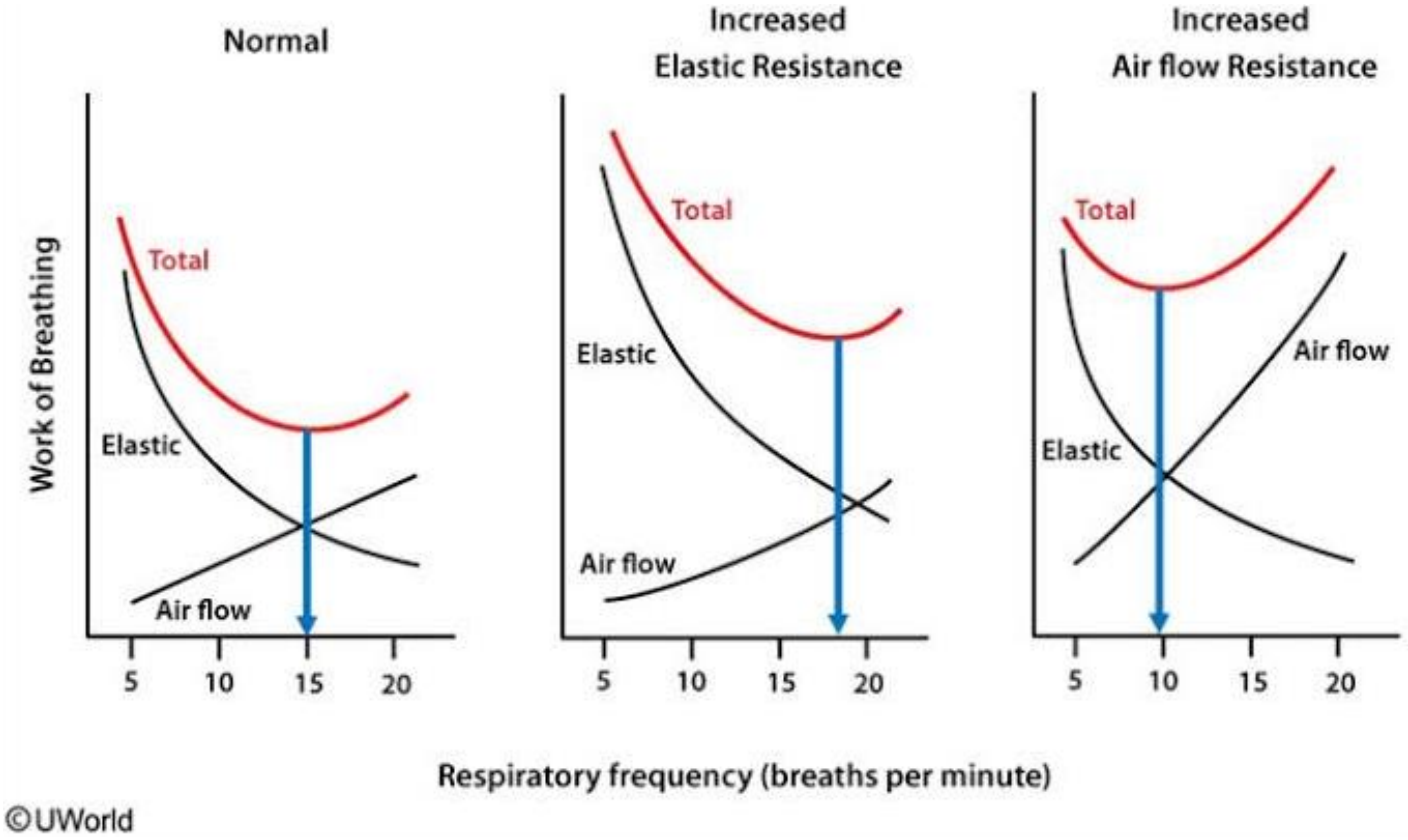
- the pressure necessary for lung inflation (generated by respiratory muscles) has to overcome two types of resistances
- **energy** needed for respiratory muscles to deal with resistances is normally very low
  - 2 – 5% of a total O_2 consumption
  - but the energy demand dramatically increases with the rise of any kind of ressistance (up to 30%)
- components of **work of breathing**
  - non-elastic work
    - viscosity = 7 %
    - airway resistance = 28 %
      - increases in narrowing of the airway lumen may be due to:
        - » a) **mucus**, cells or other material within the lumen
        - » b) thickening of the airway wall that encroaches on the lumen (**hypertrophy**)
        - » c) shortening of smooth muscle around the lumen (**bronchoconstriction**)
        - » d) collapse of the airway wall into the lumen (**emphysema**)
  - elastic work = 65 %
- work of breathing correlates with **dyspnea**
  - it is a **subjective symptom** of many respiratory diseases/conditions
  - it is described as a feeling of a lack of air or heavy chest or difficult breathing



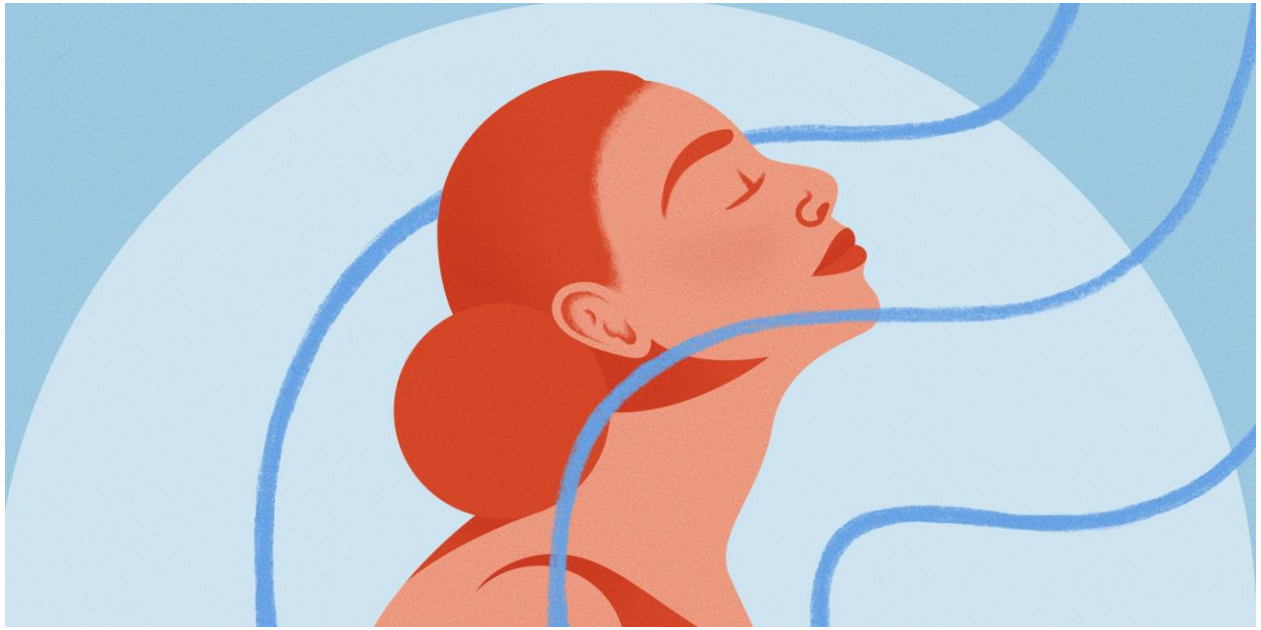
Work of breathing







Thanks for your attention!



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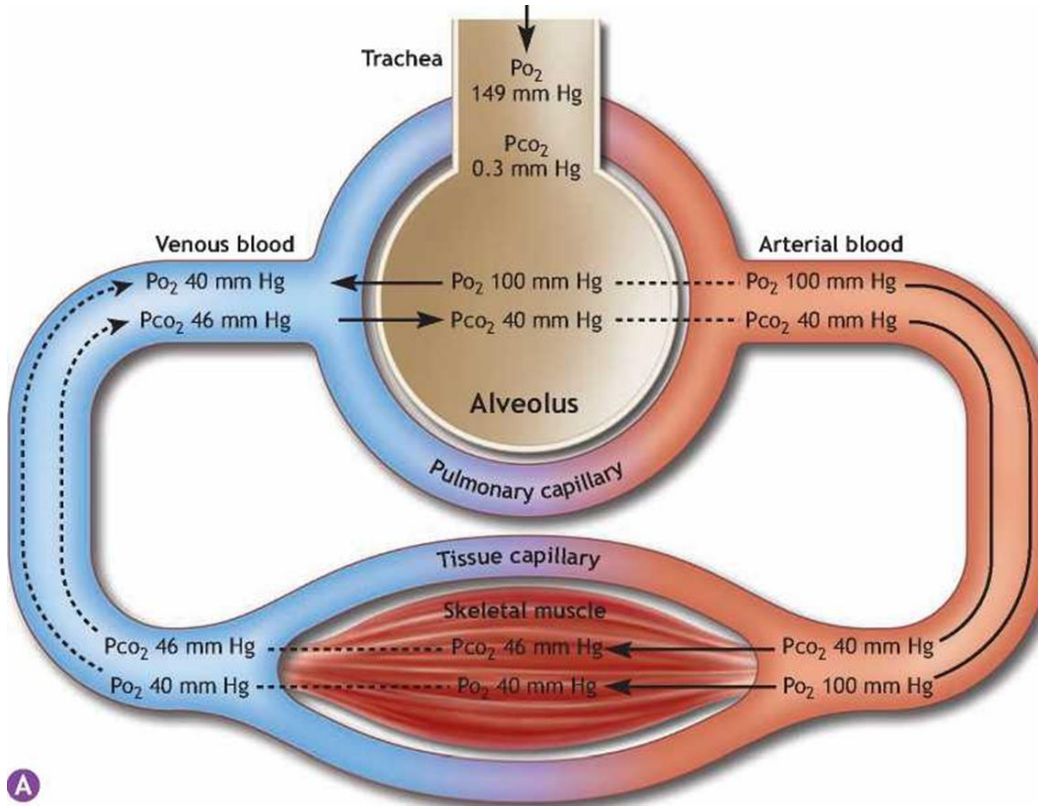
Quantitatively

- (1) inhaled **atmospheric** air
  - 21% O_2, 0.03% CO_2, 78% N_2, water gases 0.6% and the rest other gases (argon, helium, ..)
    - atm. pressure 760 mmHg (101 kPa)
    - PO_2: 0.21 x 760 = 160 mmHg
    - analogically PCO_2 = 0.3mmHg
- (2) **alveolar** air (mixture of inhaled and exhaled air)
  - P_AO_2 = 100mmHg (13.3kPa), P_ACO_2 = 40 mmHg (5.3kPa), $P_{water\ vapour}$ = 47 mmHg
    - P_AO_2 in alveolus slightly lower than atmospheric due to higher CO_2 content in alveolus (diffusion from blood)
- (3) **arterial** blood
  - PaO_2 = 90mmHg (12kPa), $PaCO_2$ = 45 mmHg
    - diffusion of oxygen not 100% and there is also physiological shunt
- (4) **venous** blood
  - PvO_2 = 30 - 50mmHg



	air (P)	alveolar (P_A)	arterial (Pa)	venous (Pv)
O_2	21kPa/150mmHg	13.3 kPa/100mmHg	12kPa/90mmHg	5.3kPa/40mmHg
CO_2	0.03kPa/0.3mmHg	5.3kPa/40mmHg	5.3kPa/40mmHg	6.0kPa/45mmHg

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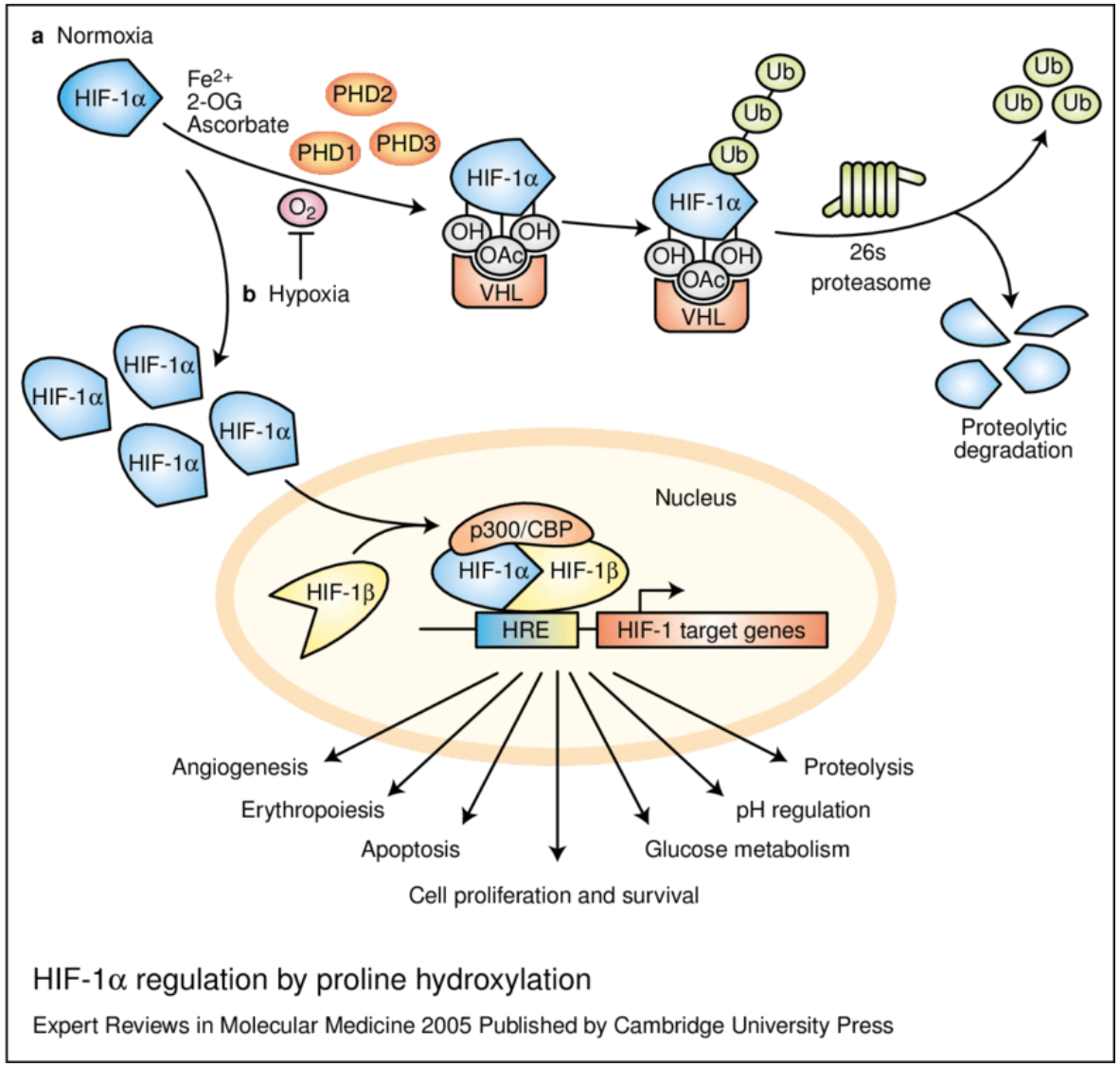
Hypoxia and its consequences



HIF-1α regulation by proline hydroxylation

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- HIF-1α regulation by proline hydroxylation
  - (a) In normoxia, hypoxia-inducible factor (HIF)-1α is hydroxylated by proline hydroxylases (PHD1, 2 and 3) in the presence of O_2, Fe^{2+}, 2-oxoglutarate (2-OG) and ascorbate.
    - Hydroxylated HIF-1α (OH) is recognised by pVHL (the product of the von Hippel-Lindau tumour suppressor gene), which, together with a multisubunit ubiquitin ligase complex, tags HIF-1α with polyubiquitin; this allows recognition by the proteasome and subsequent degradation.
    - Acetylation of HIF-1α (OAc) also promotes pVHL binding.
  - (b) In response to hypoxia, proline hydroxylation is inhibited and VHL is no longer able to bind and target HIF-1α for proteasomal degradation, which leads to HIF-1α accumulation and translocation to the nucleus.
    - There, HIF-1α dimerises with HIF-1β, binds to hypoxia-response elements (HREs) within the promoters of target genes and recruits transcriptional co-activators such as p300/CBP for full transcriptional activity.
    - A range of cell functions are regulated by the target genes, as indicated.
  - Abbreviation: CBP, CREBbinding protein; Ub, ubiquitin.

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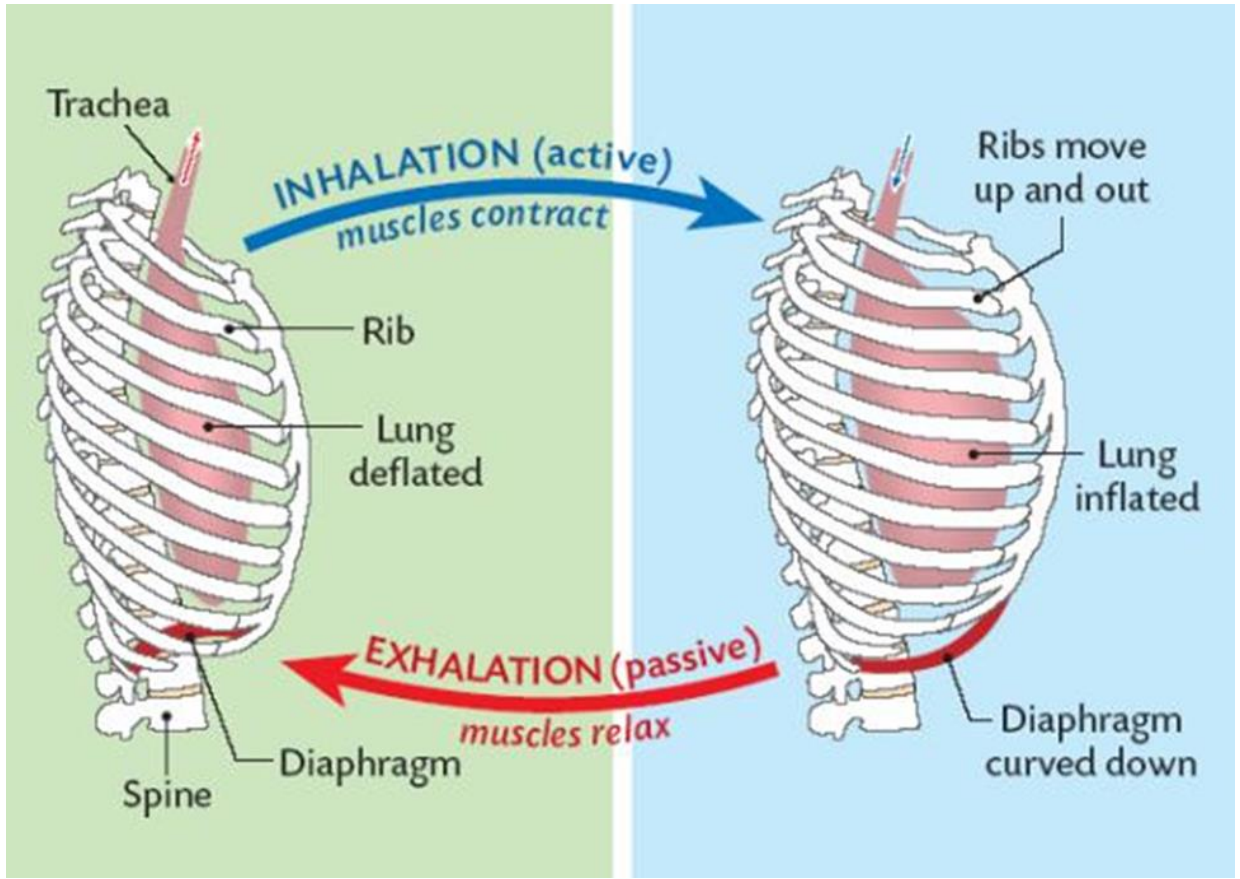
Summary

- The physiological structure of the lungs and airways ensures that
  - the work consumed for mechanical breathing is minimal
  - the airways and the lungs are able to effectively defend themselves against inhaled pathogens and particles
  - the area available to a gas exchange is huge, and the diffusion barrier minimal
  - in order to get enough O_2 into peripheral tissues, the exchange of gases in the lungs has to be as effective as possible
  - maintaining the concentration gradients necessary to keep the passive diffusion going is the principal driving force of ventilation
  - pulmonary circulation is adapted to maximize gas diffusion through the alveolar-capillary membrane



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