

What is Pulmonary Arterial Hypertension?

Pulmonary arterial hypertension (PAH) is another name for high blood pressure in the lungs. **It is not the same as high blood pressure in the body, which is measured by a blood pressure cuff on the arm.**

For people with PAH, the right side of the heart works harder to push blood through narrowed vessels in the lungs. Eventually, the extra stress causes the heart to enlarge and lose flexibility. That decreases the heart's ability to push blood out of the heart, through the lungs and to the rest of the body.

Symptoms include:

- Fatigue
- Exercise intolerance
- Shortness of breath with activity
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Loss of appetite
- Fluid retention (swelling of face, ankles, hands)

Information to remember

Always notify parents about your concerns.

Some students with PH can't tolerate hot, humid or cold weather. They sometimes will need alternative indoor activities.

Students with PAH must remain well hydrated. Please allow the student to drink water as needed. Allow frequent restroom privileges. Students with PH might take diuretics (water pills) and/or experience diarrhea from medication.

Attending school full time can be exhausting and stressful, so the student might need an Individualized Education Plan. A student with PAH can alternate between good and bad days. For some PAH students, a simple cold can cause significant illness that requires close medical attention. They also may have many medical appointments and need to travel far to see specialists.

Some students have no activity restrictions, while others are limited in the activities they can perform. If student is self-limited with a physician's letter, it's important to not restrict the student from participating in activities that his/her physician has approved. If the student chooses not to participate, allow the student to decide. If you have concerns about a student taking advantage of this guidance, please discuss with a parent before requiring a student to participate.

The student might need extra time and elevator passes to move between classrooms.

Students who don't feel well should be evaluated at the nurse's office. The nurse should always check the student's temperature and contact the parents about the situation to determine the course of action. If the school can't locate a parent, staff should call the next designated person on the information sheet provided.

Symptoms that require emergency services (911) include:

- Severe chest pain
- Difficulty breathing
- Fainting
- Seizures
- Extreme pallor or cyanosis (bluish-purple discoloration) of the lips/nail beds

Administer oxygen, if available, until emergency help arrives.

Symptoms that require you to call the parent/emergency contact include:

- Fainting episodes, even if resolved quickly.
- All injuries at school, even minor ones.
- Changes in the student's normal mental status.