

Cause and Treatment of Pneumomediastinum

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DESCRIPTION

Pneumomediastinum, also known as mediastinal emphysema, is a condition characterized by the presence of air in the mediastinum (the space in the chest between the two lungs). This can occur as a result of a traumatic injury or in conjunction with pneumothorax or other diseases. Pneumomediastinum is a rare condition. Injury or disease can both cause the condition. It most commonly occurs when air leaks into the mediastinum from any part of the lung or airways. Pneumomediastinum is more common in children because their mediastinum is made of loose tissue. Air can pass through loose tissue more easily than fibrous tissue. Primary pneumomediastinum is a form of the condition that has no obvious cause. The most common cause of secondary pneumomediastinum is injury or trauma, which can result in air leakage from the lungs or digestive tract. Pneumomediastinum can also be distinguished by the typical shortness of breath associated with a respiratory system problem. On auscultation, it is frequently identified by a "crunching" sound timed with the cardiac cycle (Hamman's crunch). As a result of the increased intrapulmonary pressure on venous flow to the heart, pneumomediastinum may also present with symptoms similar to cardiac tamponade. Because the tissues in the mediastinum slowly reabsorb the air in the cavity, most pneumomediastinums are treated cautiously.

Classification of Pneumomediastinum

Pneumomediastinum secondary: Injury or damage to the mediastinum causes this type of pneumomediastinum. It can be caused by trauma or injury, such as being hit by a sharp object, or by complications during surgical procedures, such as chest operations.

Acute pneumomediastinum: This type of pneumomediastinum is caused by smoking or using recreational drugs (methamphetamines, cocaine, and marijuana). Individuals with no pre-existing medical conditions can develop spontaneous pneumomediastinum.

Air may accumulate in the space around the lungs (the pleural space), causing the lung to collapse. Air may occasionally enter the space between the heart and the thin sac that surrounds it. This is known as a pneumopericardium. In rare cases, so much air accumulates in the middle of the chest that it presses on the heart and the great blood vessels, causing them to malfunction. All of these complications require immediate attention because they can be fatal.

Pneumomediastinum Causes

As previously stated, the most common causes of this condition are blunt force trauma or lung injury as a result of substance abuse or medical issues. Blunt trauma, explosions, or penetrating wounds can all cause airway injury.

Diagnosis

Pneumomediastinum is diagnosed using two imaging tests:

A CT scan: A CT scan employs X-rays to produce detailed images of lungs.

X-ray: An X-ray uses low-dose radiation to create images of lungs. It can aid in determining the source of the air leak.

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Pneumomediastinum Treatment

Pneumomediastinum is typically not fatal. The trapped air will eventually be absorbed by the body. The main goal of treating pneumomediastinum is to manage symptoms and

rule out any underlying health issues. In some cases, a person may require treatment for the underlying cause of the pneumomediastinum. For example, doctors can prescribe antibiotics for infections or breathing treatments.