

# Common Chest Histories

| Presenting complaint | Exploding symptom   | Relevant system reviews   | Differential diagnoses     |   | Clues to differential  |
|----------------------|---|---|----------------------------|---|--|
|                      |   |   | Grouping                   | Differentials   |  |
| Chest pain           | <p><b>Site</b></p> <p><b>Onset</b></p> <p><b>Character</b></p> <p><b>Radiation</b></p> <p><b>Associated symptoms</b></p> <p><b>Timing</b></p> <p><b>Exacerbating/relieving factors</b></p> <p><b>Severity</b></p> | <p><u>General</u></p> <p>Fever, sweats</p> <p><u>Cardiorespiratory</u></p> <p>Palpitations, SOB/wheeze, cough, sputum, leg swelling</p> | Cardiac                    | Myocardial infarction   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Crushing central chest pain</li> <li>•Radiates to neck/left arm</li> <li>•Associated nausea/SOB/sweatiness</li> <li>•Cardiovascular risk factors</li> </ul>  |
|                      |   |   |                            | Angina  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Cardiac-type chest pain</li> <li>•Associated with exertion</li> <li>•Relieved by rest</li> </ul>   |
|                      |   |   |                            | Aortic dissection   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Tearing chest pain of <u>very</u> sudden onset</li> <li>•Radiates to back</li> <li>•Pain in other sites e.g. arms, legs, neck, head</li> </ul>   |
|                      |   |   |                            | Pericarditis  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Retrosternal/precordial pleuritic chest pain</li> <li>•Relieved by sitting forward</li> <li>•May radiate to trapezius ridge/neck/shoulder</li> </ul>   |
|                      |   |   | Respiratory                | Pulmonary embolism  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Pleuritic chest pain</li> <li>•Haemoptysis &amp; SOB</li> <li>•Risk factors (long haul flight, recent surgery, immobility)</li> </ul>  |
|                      |   |   |                            | Pneumothorax  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Sudden onset pleuritic chest pain</li> <li>•May be SOB if large</li> <li>•Risk factors e.g. Marfan's appearance, COPD/asthma</li> </ul>  |
|                      |   |   | Non-cardiorespiratory      | Gastro-oesophageal reflux disease   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Retrosternal burning chest pain</li> <li>•Related to meals, lying, straining</li> <li>•Water brash</li> </ul>  |
|                      |   |   |                            | Anxiety/panic attack  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Tight chest pain, SOB, sweating, dizziness, palpitations, feeling of impending doom</li> <li>•Anxious personality &amp; other symptoms of generalised anxiety disorder</li> <li>•Recurrent episodes triggered by a stimulus (e.g. crowds)</li> </ul> |
|                      |   |   |                            | Musculoskeletal   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Sharp chest pain</li> <li>•Exacerbated by movement and inspiration</li> <li>•Can point to where it is worse</li> <li>•Exacerbated by pressure over area</li> </ul>   |
|                      |   |   | <b>Other differentials</b> | <p>Costochondritis and Tietze's syndrome (sharp pleuritic sternal pain with tenderness)</p> <p>Pleurisy (sharp unilateral pleuritic chest pain)</p> <p>Gastritis</p> <p>Myocarditis</p> |  |

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|----------------|--|---|----------------------------|--|--|
| Breathlessness | <p><u>Timing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•When started</li> <li>•Acute/ gradual onset</li> <li>•Duration</li> <li>•Progression</li> <li>•Intermittent or continuous</li> </ul> <p><u>Breathlessness</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Exertion tolerance, what makes them stop</li> <li>•Orthopnoea</li> <li>•Paroxysmal nocturnal dyspnoea</li> <li>•Diurnal/seasonal variation</li> </ul> | <p><u>General</u></p> <p>Fever, sweats</p> <p><u>Cardiorespiratory</u></p> <p>Chest pain, palpitations, cough, sputum, leg swelling</p> | Cardiac                    | Myocardial infarction  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Acute onset SOB, often wakes them</li> <li>•Associated nausea/sweatiness</li> <li>•May be crushing central chest pain</li> <li>•Cardiovascular risk factors</li> </ul> |
|                |  |   |                            | Congestive cardiac failure   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•SOB, orthopnoea, PND</li> <li>•Pink frothy sputum if acute LVF</li> <li>•Peripheral oedema</li> <li>•Cardiac history</li> </ul>  |
|                |  |   | Respiratory                | LRTI/pneumonia   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Acute SOB, cough &amp; sputum</li> <li>•Systemic symptoms e.g. fever</li> </ul>  |
|                |  |   |                            | Asthma   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Intermittent wheeze</li> <li>•Diurnal variation</li> <li>•Nocturnal cough</li> <li>•Exacerbating factors e.g. exercise, pets</li> </ul>                                |
|                |  |   |                            | COPD   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Chronic SOB</li> <li>•Significant smoking history</li> <li>•Chronic sputum production</li> </ul>   |
|                |  |   |                            | Pneumothorax   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Sudden onset pleuritic chest pain</li> <li>•Risk factors e.g. Marfan's appearance, COPD/asthma</li> </ul>  |
|                |  |   |                            | Pulmonary embolism   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Pleuritic chest pain</li> <li>•Haemoptysis</li> <li>•Risk factors (long haul flight, recent surgery, immobility)</li> </ul>  |
|                |  |   | Pulmonary fibrosis         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Progressive SOB over long period</li> <li>•Dry cough</li> </ul>  |  |
|                |  |   | <b>Other differentials</b> | <p>Anaemia</p> <p>Hyperventilation in anxiety</p> <p>Pleural effusion</p> <p>DKA</p> <p>Lobar collapse</p> <p>Bronchiectasis</p> <p>Aortic stenosis</p> <p>Neuromuscular causes</p> <p>Sarcoidosis/TB</p> <p>Extrinsic allergic alveolitis</p> |  |

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|--------------|---|--|----------------------------|--|---|
| <b>Cough</b> | <u>Timing</u><br>•When started<br>•Acute/ gradual onset<br>•Duration<br>•Progression<br>•Intermittent or continuous<br><br><u>Cough</u><br>•Productive or non-productive<br>•Triggers, nocturnal<br><br><u>Sputum (if present)</u><br>•How much, how often<br>•Colour, consistency<br>•Any blood<br><br><u>Haemoptysis (if present)</u><br>•Volume<br>•Fresh or altered blood<br>•Frequency<br>•Nature of associated sputum if any? Mixed in? | <u>General</u><br>Fever, sweats, weight loss<br><br><u>Cardiorespiratory</u><br>Chest pain, palpitations, SOB/wheeze, leg swelling | Respiratory                | URTI/LRTI/ pneumonia   | •Acute cough & sputum<br>•May be associated SOB<br>•Systemic symptoms e.g. fever                            |
|              |   |  |                            | Asthma   | •Nocturnal cough<br>•Intermittent wheeze<br>•Diurnal variation<br>•Exacerbating factors e.g. exercise, pets |
|              |   |  |                            | Post-nasal drip  | •Chronic rhinitis/ sinusitis<br>•Chronic cough to clear throat  |
|              |   |  |                            | COPD   | •Chronic productive cough & sputum<br>•Chronic SOB<br>•Significant smoking history                          |
|              |   |  |                            | Pulmonary embolism   | •Haemoptysis<br>•Pleuritic chest pain & SOB<br>•Risk factors (long haul flight, recent surgery, immobility) |
|              |   |  |                            | Lung tumour  | •Haemoptysis<br>•Weight loss<br>•Significant smoking history  |
|              |   |  | <b>Other differentials</b> | GORD<br>Smoking<br>LVF<br>Drugs (e.g. ACE-inhibitor)<br>Bronchiectasis<br>Interstitial lung disease<br>Sarcoidosis/TB<br>Cystic fibrosis |   |

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|--------------------|--|--|----------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Haemoptysis</b> | <u>Timing</u><br>•When started<br>•Acute/ gradual onset<br>•Duration<br>•Progression<br>•Intermittent or continuous<br><br><u>Cough</u><br>•Productive or non-productive<br>•Triggers, nocturnal<br><br><u>Haemoptysis</u><br>•Volume<br>•Fresh or altered blood<br>•Frequency<br>•Nature of associated sputum if any? Mixed in?<br><br><u>Sputum (if present)</u><br>•How much, how often<br>•Colour, consistency<br>•Any blood | <u>General</u><br>Fever, sweats, weight loss<br><br><u>Cardiorespiratory</u><br>Chest pain, palpitations, SOB/wheeze, leg swelling | Respiratory                | Pneumonia   | •Acute cough & sputum<br>•May be associated SOB<br>•Systemic symptoms e.g. fever            |
|                    |  |  |                            | Pulmonary embolism  | •Pleuritic chest pain & SOB<br>•Risk factors (long haul flight, recent surgery, immobility) |
|                    |  |  |                            | Lung tumour   | •Weight loss<br>•Significant smoking history  |
|                    |  |  | <b>Other differentials</b> | Prolonged coughing<br>Pulmonary oedema<br>Bronchiectasis<br>Mitral stenosis<br>TB<br>Laryngeal carcinoma<br>Polyarteritis nodosa<br>Goodpasture's syndrome<br>Aspergillosis |   |