

What is airway malacia?

Airway malacia happens when a baby's airway does not form as it should.

- A normal airway is stiff so that air can move in and out of it easily.
- With malacia, the airway is soft and floppy. This can cause it to collapse with any extra effort, such as coughing and deep breathing.

Airway malacia can affect 1 or more parts of the airway.

- Laryngomalacia means soft larynx (voice box).
- Tracheomalacia means soft trachea (windpipe).
- Bronchomalacia means soft bronchus (branch of the windpipe that enters the lungs).

What causes it?

Babies are born with airway malacia. It may happen alone or with other problems. The exact cause is unknown, but it may be caused by poor muscle tone in the upper airway.

What are the possible symptoms?

A common symptom is noisy breathing that can get louder with feeding, excitement or crying.

Rare symptoms may include:

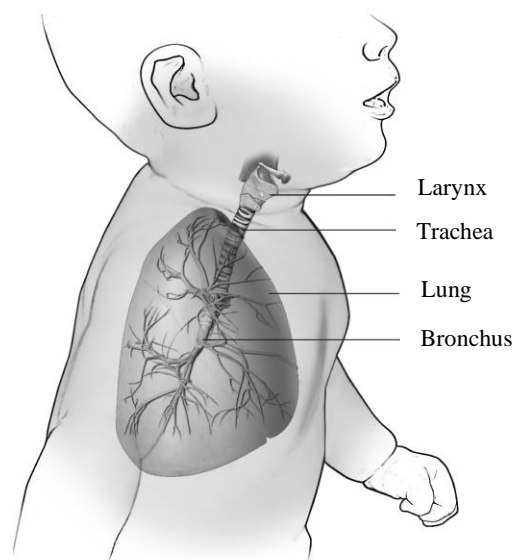
- Trouble feeding
- Poor weight gain
- Breathing problems, including not breathing at all
- Skin, lips and gums turning a blue or purple color from breathing problems

What tests could my baby have?

Many times, the doctor can find the problem by examining your baby. For babies who have more severe symptoms, the doctor may need to do a test called an airway endoscopy.

For this test, a nurse or doctor will give your baby sedation medicine. This helps your baby go to sleep for the test. The doctor will then:

- Place a thin, soft, flexible tube that has a tiny camera into your baby's nose. The tube is often called a scope.



In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Airway malacia, continued

- Slide the scope down through the windpipe.
- Check the pictures to see if there are any problems.

What is the treatment?

Most babies outgrow airway malacia by the time they are 12 to 18 months old. As your baby grows, the airway also grows and gets more rigid (stiff). Some babies may need treatment for GERD (gastroesophageal reflux disease).

When should I call the doctor?

Call or see your doctor if your baby:

- Eats or drinks less than normal.
- Has fewer wet diapers than normal.
- Stops gaining weight.
- Has any choking with feeds.
- Has any vomiting (throwing up).

Also call the doctor if you have any questions or concerns about how your baby is doing.

When should I call 911?

Call 911 **right away** if your baby:

- Is so weak and tired that they hardly respond to you.
- Is working **very** hard to breathe or finds it hard to take a breath.
- Grunts when they breathe.
- Has chest retractions (skin pulling in around the ribs and chest when breathing).
- Has a blue or dark purple color to the nails, lips or gums.
- Stops breathing for more than 10 seconds.
- Cannot feed or talk while trying to breathe.
- Has any breathing problem that needs care **right away**.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

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