

How your lungs work

You have 2 lungs, a left and a right. Your heart sits between them.

Your body needs oxygen to work properly. Your lungs move the oxygen from the air into your blood. It then travels around your body, to where it is needed.

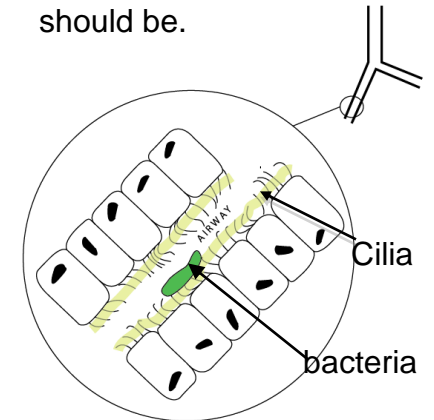
There are lots of tubes, also known as airways, in your lungs. As you breathe in the air moves down through smaller and narrower airways. You have almost 15000 miles of airways.

At the end of the smallest airways there are about 300 million little balloon like air sacs called Alveoli (al-v-o-lee), these are where the oxygen gets into your blood.

Your diaphragm (di-a-fragm) is a really strong muscle at the bottom of your lungs, when it works/contracts it helps suck air into the lungs. When it relaxes the air comes out.

Your ribs move out as you breathe in, and in as you breathe out, you do this about 20 times a minute.

Inside the tubes in your lungs is a thin layer of mucus. This catches anything you breathe in, like bugs (bacteria) dust and so on. In CF this mucus is stickier than it should be.



Into the mucus fine finger like cilia (sill-e-er) stick out from the airway wall. These waft back and forward and move the mucus up and out of the lungs. Because the mucus is stickier in CF these cilia cannot always work properly.

When you do your physio or exercise, the air fills your lungs better. When you do a huff or cough, it takes with it the mucus. You may see some of it, if you know how to cough it out.

