

## **Ask Dr. Lane**

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### **What is Pulmonary Fibrosis?**

Pulmonary Fibrosis is an autoimmune disorder that causes inflammation to attack the walls of the alveoli or air sacs. Scarring occurs in the walls and they become thick and difficult to distend. It takes much more work to move the lungs during the act of breathing, and the thick, scarred walls interfere with gas exchange. The patient becomes breathless in the struggle to move the lungs and to get enough oxygen in, and CO<sub>2</sub> out. This kind of lung disease is therefore called a restrictive disease because the movement of the lung tissue and the gas exchange are restricted. This is in contrast to obstructive diseases like asthma and emphysema where the problem is in the obstruction of the airways. In pulmonary fibrosis, there is little that can be done as far as treatment is concerned other than anti-inflammatory drugs that are usually in the form of corticosteroids.

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