

## THORACIC SURGERY IN RESPIRATORY FAILURE

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Respiratory failure is a syndrome that arises when gas exchange is disrupted secondary to pulmonary or extrapulmonary conditions that lead to dysfunction of one or more components of the respiratory system which comprises the thoracic wall (including the pleura and diaphragm), airways, alveoli, pulmonary circulation, and nervous system(1).

Respiratory failure is categorized into 2 main types.

Type 1- Hypoxemic respiratory failure

Type 2- Hypercapnic respiratory failure

Hypoxemic respiratory failure is characterized by a PaO<sub>2</sub> lower than 60 mmHg. Pathophysiologic mechanisms include shunt, decreased FiO<sub>2</sub> of inspired air, ventilation-perfusion mismatch, alveolar hypoventilation and diffusion abnormalities(1).

Hypercarbic respiratory failure is characterized by a PaCO<sub>2</sub> higher than 45 mmHg. Underlying mechanisms involve pathologic conditions affecting the central and peripheral nervous system, muscles of respiration, upper airways, thoracic wall and pleura(1).

Respiratory failure can be acute or chronic. The patient's history, physical examination and blood gases help to distinguish between them(1).

The distinction between acute and chronic respiratory failure is relevant to postoperative morbidity and mortality. Acute respiratory failure has been found to carry an increased risk of mortality compared to chronic respiratory failure(2,3).

Therefore patients should first be treated for acute respiratory failure until becoming stable, and later reevaluated for non emergent surgeries.

Underlying diseases in patients with chronic respiratory failure, such as COPD, asthma, restrictive lung diseases and sleep apnea, should be under optimal control with long term oxygen therapy and, if needed, noninvasive mechanical ventilation(4).

### PREOPERATIVE ASSESSMENT IN RESPIRATORY FAILURE:

The goal of preoperative assessment is to determine the risks of intra- and postoperative complications and to mitigate them.

Chronic respiratory failure can be secondary to many conditions, COPD being the most common. Even patients with severe COPD can tolerate noncoronary thoracic surgery well. Provided that they receive a good preoperative assessment and appropriate precautions are taken, the risk of postoperative pulmonary complications can be

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**CONCLUSION:**

While respiratory failure is considered to bring about a high risk for any surgery, it is of particular importance in thoracic surgery as a cause of increased morbidity and mortality.

In recent years, in parallel with the extension of human lifespan, the number of patients with respiratory failure needing surgery is steadily increasing. During the same time period, we are witnessing increasing diversity of available bronchodilator treatments, improving invasive and noninvasive mechanical ventilation techniques, increased awareness of the effectiveness of pulmonary rehabilitation and the development of new minimally invasive surgery procedures and different anesthesia techniques are being developed.

Before declaring patients with respiratory failure as "inoperable", they should be given a chance to be reevaluated for operability by a center experienced in managing those patients.

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