

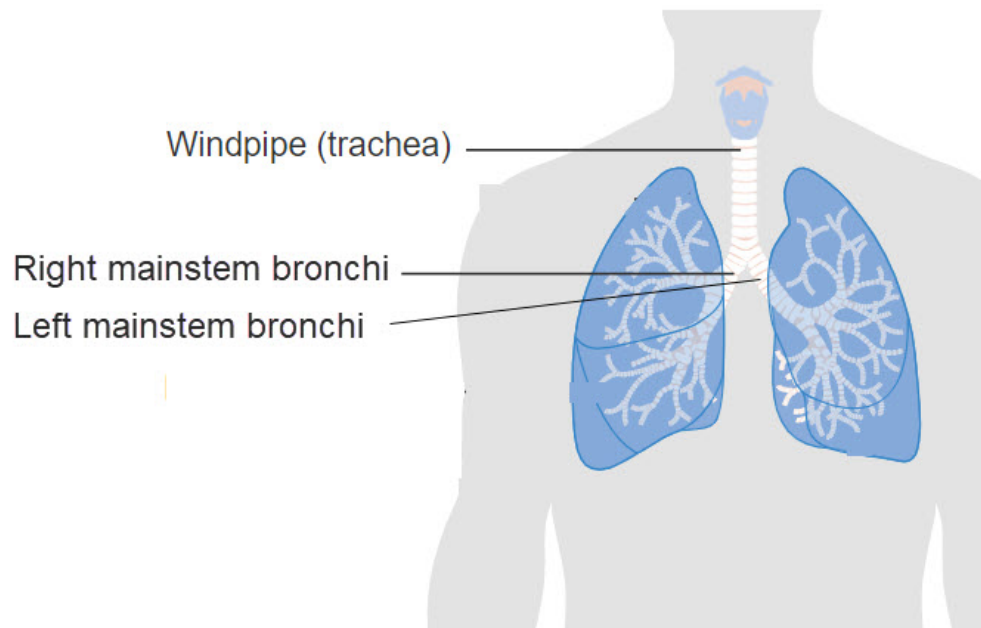
Airway Malacia (“Floppy Airways”)

What is airway malacia?

Airway Malacia is a condition in which either the trachea (also called the airway or windpipe) or the right or left mainstem bronchi is soft and easily collapses.

- If the trachea is affected it is called trachea-malacia
- If the bronchi are affected it is called broncho-malacia

This causes the airway to become blocked and makes it very hard for the child to breathe. Children can be born with this condition (congenital) or it can develop after being on a ventilator for a long time (acquired).



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The **trachea** is the tube that connects your mouth to your lungs. The **bronchi** move air in and out of the lungs.

What are the symptoms of airway malacia?

- Noisy breathing (wheezing)
 - The noise is worse when the baby is fussy or bearing down with hard crying or having a bowel movement
 - The noise is better when the baby is asleep
- Sudden drop in oxygen levels causing the baby to turn blue
- Frequent lung infections.

How is airway malacia diagnosed?

The doctor will look for the symptoms described above and may do a bronchoscopy. **Bronchoscopy** is a procedure in which a scope with a camera is placed into the airway allowing the doctor to see the airway movement. The doctor will be able to tell you where in your baby's airway the malacia was seen.

How is airway malacia treated?

Congenital airway malacia will improve as your baby grows, so the cartilage in the airway matures and gets firmer. Ventilator support may also be needed. In cases of severe airway malacia, surgery may be recommended. This is rare.

Where can I learn more?

- Boston Children's Hospital: <http://www.childrenshospital.org/conditions-and-treatments/conditions/t/tracheomalacia>
- Cincinnati Children's Hospital
<https://www.cincinnatichildrens.org/health/t/tracheomalacia>

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