

Lung Flow

As depicted in Figure ?? part of the microcirculation system occurs in the lungs. When you breathe in air with an enhanced oxygen concentration flows from the trachea or windpipe through a system of multi-branching airways or bronchae to very small cavities called alveoli as shown in Figure 1. These alveoli are surrounded by capillaries. The enhanced oxygen concentration in the air causes diffusion of oxygen into the capillaries and to the arterial system. At the same time carbon dioxide diffuses from the venous system back into the air in the alveoli (Figure 2). When you breathe out the the excess carbon dioxide in the alveoli is expelled and fresh oxygen is inhaled.

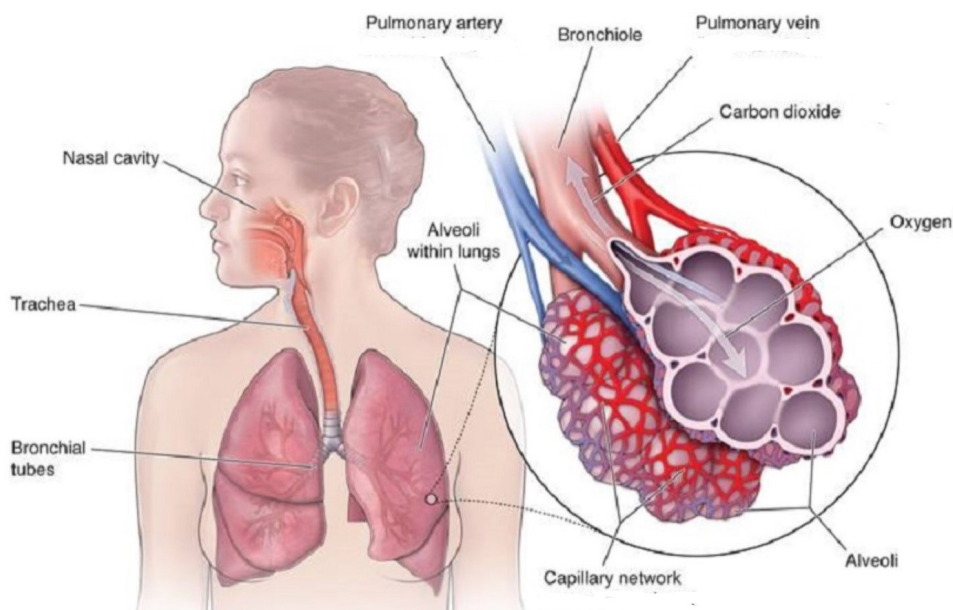


Figure 1: The microcirculation in the lungs. From www.templehealth.org

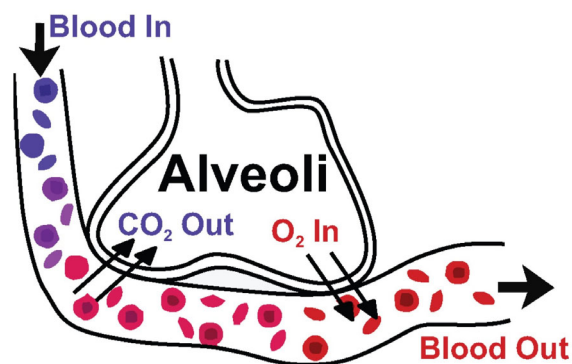


Figure 2: Gas exchange in the alveoli. From Wikimedia Commons.