

Types of Apnea

Apnea is defined as a pause in breathing. Short pauses in breathing and/or irregular breathing can be normal in infants. However, if an infant experiences a color change (red, blue, or gray) associated with these pauses, it may not be normal.

Prolonged apnea is a pause in breathing longer than 20 seconds or a shorter pause in breathing if associated with a color change.

Classifications of apnea

1. *Central apnea*: An event in which the infant does not make any attempt to breathe.
2. *Obstructive apnea*: An event in which the infant continues to try and breath (struggles to move his/her chest) but is unable to move air out of the nose and/or mouth. This type of apnea is usually due to some blockage in the airway.
3. *Mixed apnea*: A combination of central apnea and obstructive apnea.

Types of apnea:

1. *Apnea of Prematurity (AOP)*: This definition is met when the apnea lasts longer than 20 seconds or a shorter pause in breathing associated with a heart rate drop, color change, or oxygen desaturation, in an infant that is born prematurely (<37 weeks). This is most likely due to an immaturity in the brainstem that controls breathing. Premature infants who have persistent apnea with they are otherwise ready to be discharged from the hospital are diagnosed with unresolved apnea of prematurity.
2. *Apnea of Infancy (AOI)*: This definition is met when there is an unexplained episode of cessation of breathing for 20 seconds or longer or a shorter pause in breathing associated with a drop in heart rate, color change (red, blue, or gray-pale) and/or marked decrease in muscle tone (limpness). The term apnea of infancy generally refers to infants with a gestational age of 37 weeks or more.

3. *Apparent Life Threatening Event (ALTE)*: This definition is met when there is an episode that is frightening to the observer and is characterized by some combination of apnea (central or obstructive), color change (usually blue or gray-pale but occasionally red), marked change in muscle tone (usually limpness), choking or gagging.