

## Mouse Having Trouble Breathing

**A mouse goes from sneezing to having severe trouble breathing.**

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**Q:** My mouse is very sick today. She has had the occasional sneeze for a few months but never got any worse before this. Her sides are heaving, her mouth is opening and shutting, and she is making strange sounds, sometimes like clicking, sometimes like wheezing. It's possible that her abdomen may be a little swollen, but I may be being paranoid. These symptoms are intermittent.

Veterinarians here cost \$200 for mice. I'm on disability, so I can't pay that. I usually treat sick mice myself with Tetracycline as my breeder showed me. They get an initial dose by hand of the powder mixed with water, which I put in their open mouths, and I put it in the water for about a week. I don't know if an antibiotic will help her today. I've put some in her water but don't dare put it in her mouth because she may be having trouble breathing or swallowing. I put some on her fur for her to wash off.

I know it's not easy for you to diagnose without seeing the mouse, but please understand that it's your advice or do nothing. Any thoughts or ideas that you may have will help.

**A:** I am sorry to hear about your mouse. As you state, it is impossible to make a diagnosis over the Internet. Even if I made one, it could be equally impossible to get the right treatment.

What you describe sounds like signs of severe respiratory distress. There are two general categories for this. It could be a problem in her chest cavity, which includes heart disease and lung disease, or there may be an imbalance in her metabolic system caused by organ failure. All of these conditions are very serious and can be fatal without intervention.

Unfortunately, bacterial infection is only one of numerous causes of disease, and the antibiotic you are trying to get into her will likely not succeed in helping her.

You don't say how old she is; knowing her age would help in deciding what could be wrong. In a young mouse, what you describe could be infectious. It is common to have the primary problem be a virus with a secondary bacterial infection. The antibiotic might help a little but will not cure this. In an older mouse, I would worry about heart disease, cancer and organ failure. Diagnosing and treating these problems would be difficult, even if you had all the money in the world to spend.

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