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**Are Cytokine Storms the Cause of Respiratory Distress?**

The ICU doctor in New York City who sounded the alarm about lung damage from ventilators says COVID-19 lungs don’t act like pneumonia. They act like high-altitude sickness, which causes a dangerous fluid build-up in the lungs that prevents oxygen exchange.

But Covid-19 patients aren’t hiking the Himalayas. Instead they might be experiencing a “cytokine storm,” where infection-fighting cells go into overdrive, causing toxic fluid build-up in the lungs that prevents oxygen from reaching the bloodstream. People with high altitude disease are sometimes treated with hyperbaric oxygen therapy. One hundred percent oxygen in a pressurized chamber pushes oxygen into the patient’s plasma. Hyperbaric oxygen treatment is being considered, but the risk of spreading the virus is high.

“**Why Some COVID-19 Patients Crash: The Body’s Immune System Might Be To Blame,**” Geoff Brumfiel, NPR, April 7, 2020: [https://n.pr/3acjWrK](https://n.pr/3acjWrK)