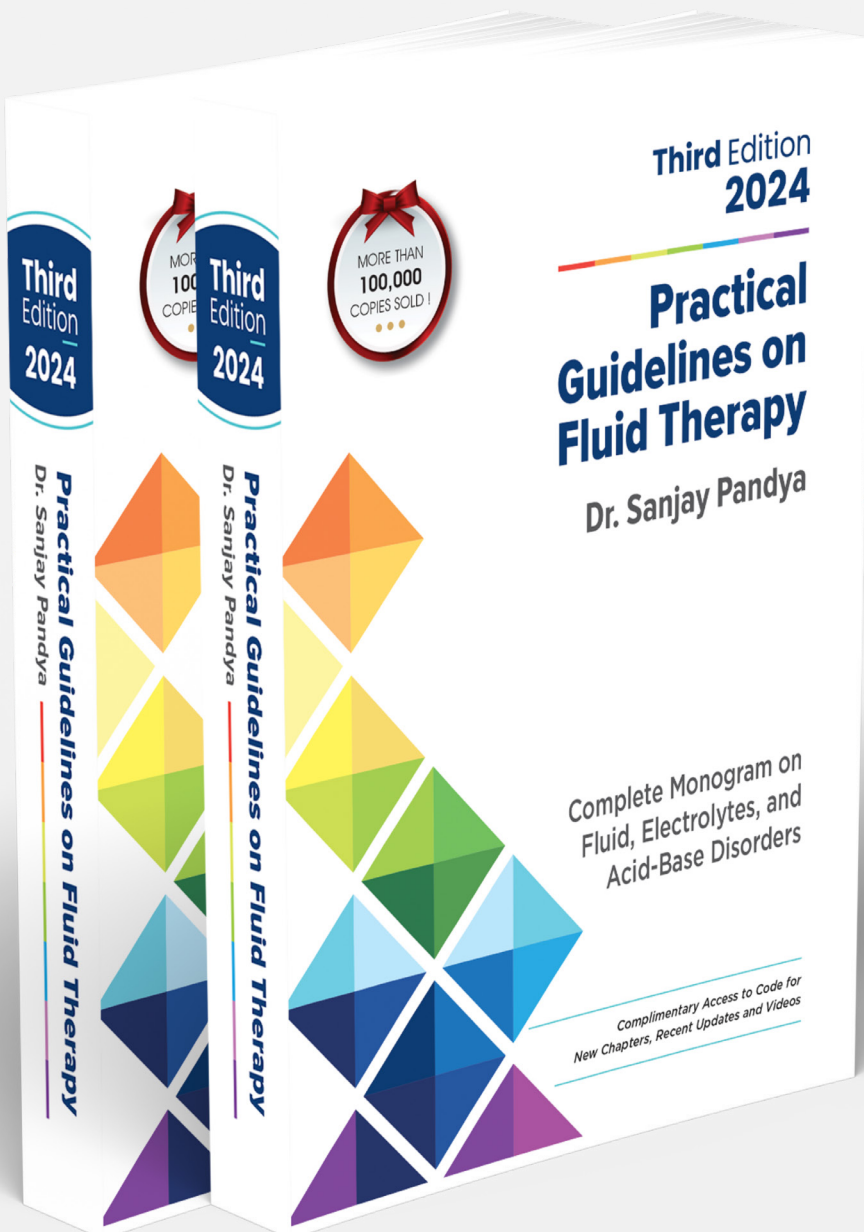




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Chapter 33:

Respiratory Acid–Base Disorders



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Table of Contents

Part 1 Physiology

Overview of total body fluid distribution, water balance, and electrolyte compartments.

Chapter 1

Part 7 Acid-Base Disorders

Concepts, interpretation, and management of metabolic and respiratory acid-base disorders.

Chapter 30-33

Part 2 Basics of Intravenous Fluids and Solutions

Introduction to crystalloids and colloids, their composition, clinical use, precautions, and contraindications.

Chapter 2-5

Part 8 Fluid Therapy in Medical Disorders

Guidelines for fluid management in conditions like GI diseases, liver disorders, respiratory issues, and diabetic emergencies.

Chapter 34-41

Part 3 Fluid Replacement Strategies

Principles of fluid therapy, including maintenance, resuscitation, and special considerations for the elderly.

Chapter 6-9

Part 9 Fluid Therapy in Surgical Disorders

Fluid management before, during, and after surgery, including TURP syndrome and burns.

Chapter 42-47

Part 4 Parenteral Additives

Composition, clinical applications, and precautions for various parenteral additives.

Chapter 10-14

Part 10 Fluid Therapy in Pediatrics

Special considerations for fluid management in children and neonates, including resuscitation, maintenance, and oral rehydration.

Chapter 48-50

Part 5 Hemodynamic Monitoring

Principles and techniques for assessing fluid status and cardiac output, using basic and advanced methods.

Chapter 15-19

Part 11 Fluid Therapy in Obstetrics

Fluid management strategies for pregnancy, cesarean delivery, preeclampsia, and labor-related hyponatremia.

Chapter 51-54

Part 6 Electrolyte Disorders

Causes, presentation, diagnosis, and management of various electrolyte imbalances.

Chapter 20-29

Part 12 Parenteral Nutrition

Principles, indications, and administration of parenteral nutrition, with disease-specific guidelines and complication management.

Chapter 55-57

33

Respiratory Acid-Base Disorders

RESPIRATORY ACIDOSIS	391	Treatment	395
Definition and basic understanding.....	391	General measures	395
Renal compensation.....	391	Oxygen therapy	395
Respiratory acidosis vs. metabolic alkalosis	392	Ventilatory support.....	396
Relation between hypercapnia and hypoxemia	392	Alkali therapy.....	396
Etiology	392	RESPIRATORY ALKALOSIS	397
Clinical features.....	392	Definition and basic understanding.....	397
Diagnosis	393	Renal compensation.....	397
History	393	Etiology	397
Physical examination.....	393	Clinical features.....	397
Investigations	393	Diagnosis	398
		Treatment	399

Respiratory acidosis and respiratory alkalosis are the two primary respiratory acid-base disorders commonly encountered in clinical practice, both resulting from primary changes in $p\text{CO}_2$ due to various disorders.

RESPIRATORY ACIDOSIS

DEFINITION AND BASIC UNDERSTANDING

Respiratory acidosis, also known as primary hypercapnia, is a clinical disorder characterized by a primary elevation in the PaCO_2 (>45 mmHg) leading to a reduction in pH (<7.35) and variable compensatory increase in the plasma

HCO_3^- concentration.

Respiratory acidosis occurs when the effective alveolar ventilation (CO_2 excretion by the lung) fails to keep pace with the rate of CO_2 production. Acute respiratory acidosis occurs rapidly within <48 hours, while chronic respiratory acidosis develops slowly over days to weeks (>48 hours).

Renal compensation

Respiratory acidosis leads to renal compensation through increased urinary H^+ secretion, resulting in acidic urine. This gradual process leads to a rise in plasma HCO_3^- levels, mitigating acidosis. Because renal compensation is a slow process, the compensatory increase in HCO_3^- is

small in acute respiratory acidosis. In contrast, in chronic respiratory acidosis, the compensatory rise in HCO_3 is more substantial over time due to robust and prolonged renal compensation.

Acute respiratory acidosis: Every 10 mm of Hg rise in PaCO_2 causes 1 mEq/L rise in HCO_3 and 0.1 fall in pH.

Chronic respiratory acidosis: Every 10 mm Hg rise in PaCO_2 causes a 4 mEq/L rise in HCO_3 and a 0.03 fall in pH.

Serum HCO_3 usually does not exceed 38 mEq/L due to compensation. If HCO_3 is >38 mEq/L, think of concomitant metabolic alkalosis.

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