

Joe has a problem

You are a GP. Joe is 25 years old and is one of your patients. He comes to see you, complaining of breathlessness and a tight feeling in his chest. You don't have very much about him in your records. He had all his routine vaccinations when he was a baby and at school, but he hasn't been to the surgery for years. He has a black eye, but apart from that there is nothing remarkable in his appearance.

On questioning, he tells you, slightly sheepishly, that he got into a fight at the pub the previous weekend (though it wasn't his fault) and he got knocked over. He has only really noticed the breathlessness since the accident and he notices it mainly when he's exercising. However, he has been waking at night feeling breathlessness. He doesn't think he's had a temperature and no sore throat or rash and he hasn't been abroad recently. When you ask him some probing questions about his lifestyle, he looks embarrassed again and admits that he's been a smoker since he was 17, but he only smokes 2 or 3 a day, when he's having a pint with his mates. His nicotine stained fingers suggest he smokes more than he's admitting, but you let that go and ask about his work. He tells you that he's worked in "Deals on Wheels" for the last two years. It's a workshop under the railway arches where they repair cars that have been involved in accidents. He tells you proudly that he can do pretty well anything – panel beating, re-sprays, sorting out scuffs on bumpers and wheel trims. It's the longest he's been in one job and he really likes it. Before that, he worked on a series of building sites, demolition sites, and on road maintenance, but never stopped in anything for long. Joe stops abruptly and looks at you for a solution to his problem.

What will you do now in order to make a diagnosis and formulate some treatment?