

GRADE OF DYSPNEA	DESCRIPTION
0	Not troubled by breathlessness, except with strenuous exercise
1	Shortness of breath walking on level ground or with walking up a slight hill
2	Walks slower than people of similar age on level ground due to breathlessness, or has to stop to rest when walking at own pace on level ground
3	Stops to rest after walking 100 m or after walking a few minutes on level ground
4	Too breathless to leave the house, or breathless with activities of daily living (e.g., dressing/undressing)

^aWhich has been incorporated into the Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease (GOLD) guidelines as a possible tool for rating dyspnea in chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

Source: Reproduced with permission from DA Mahler, CK Wells: Evaluation of clinical methods for rating dyspnea. Chest 93:580, 1988.

■ DIFFERENTIAL DIAGNOSIS

This chapter focuses largely on chronic dyspnea, which is defined as symptoms lasting longer than 1 month and can arise from a broad array of different underlying conditions, most commonly attributable to pulmonary or cardiac conditions that account for as many as 85% of the underlying causes of dyspnea. However, as many as one-third of patients may have multifactorial reasons underlying dyspnea. Examples of a wide array of conditions that underlie dyspnea with possible mechanisms underlying the presenting symptoms are described in **Table 37-2**.

TABLE 37-2 Differential Diagnosis of Disease Processes Underlying Dyspnea