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# Structural Aspects of Postnatal Lung Development – Alveolar Formation and Growth

Peter H. Burri

Institute of Anatomy, University of Bern, Bern, Switzerland

**Key Words**  
Lung development · Lung growth · Alveolarization · Late alveolarization · Lung microvasculature · Intussusceptive microvascular growth

**Abstract**  
The human lung is born with a fraction of the adult complement of alveoli. The postnatal stages of human lung development comprise an alveolar stage, a stage of microvascular maturation, and very likely a stage of late alveolarization. The characteristic structural features of the alveolar stage are well known; they are very alike in human and rat lungs. The bases for alveolar formation are represented by immature interalveolar walls with two capillary layers with a central sheet of connective tissue. Interalveolar septa are formed by folding up of one of the two capillary layers. In the alveolar stage, alveolar formation occurs rapidly and is typically very conspicuous in both species; it has therefore been termed 'bulk alveolarization'. During and after alveolarization the septa with double capillary networks are restructured to the mature form with a single network. This happens in the stage of microvascular maturation. After these stages the lung proceeds to a phase of growth during which capillary growth by intussusception plays an important role in supporting gas exchange. In view of reports that alveoli are added after the stage of microvascular maturation, the question arises whether the present concept of alveolar formation needs revision. On the ba-

sis of morphological and experimental findings we can state that mature lungs contain all the features needed for 'late alveolarization' by the classical septation process. Because of the high plasticity of the lung tissues, late alveolarization or some forms of compensatory alveolar formation may be considered for the human lung.

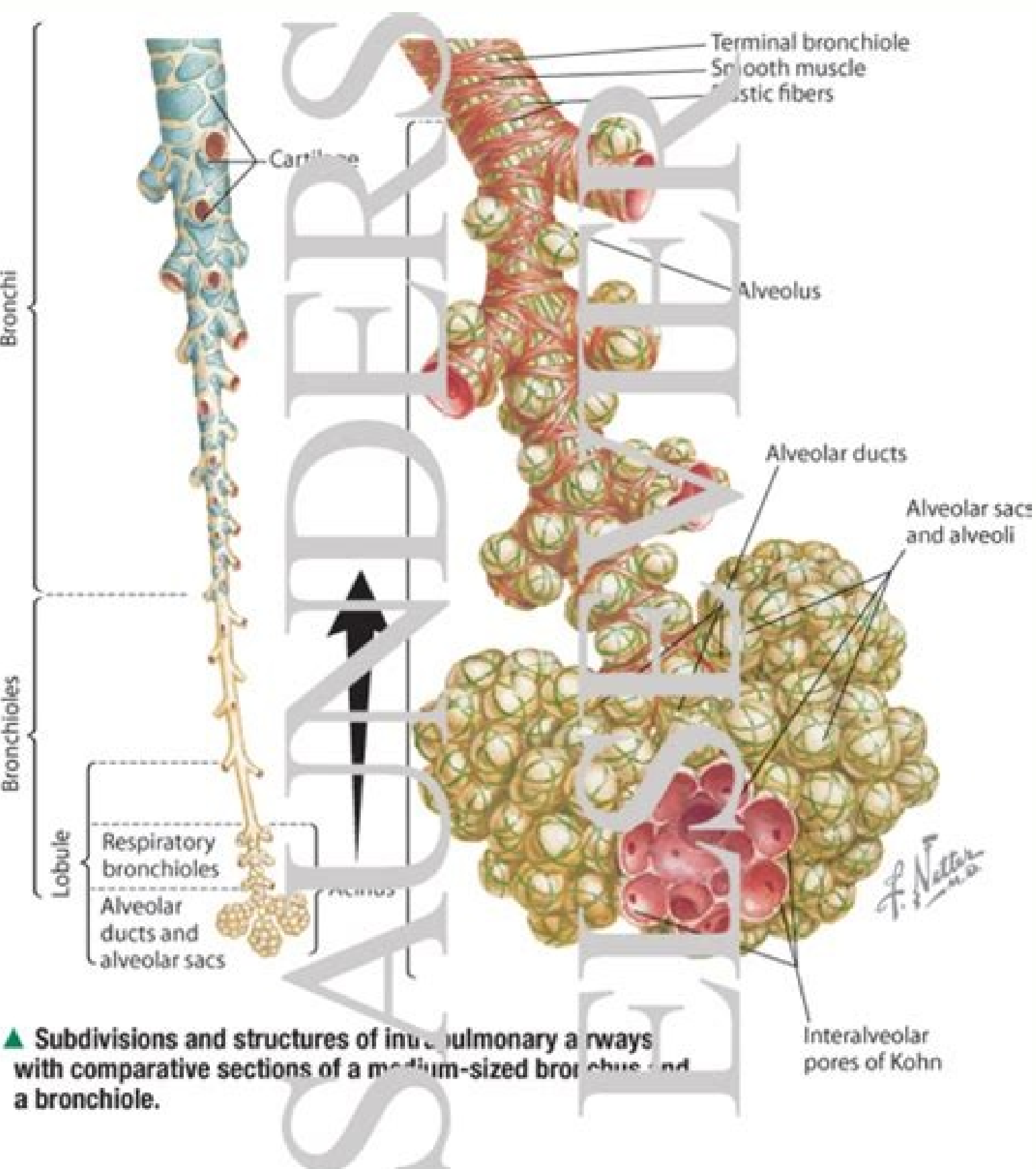
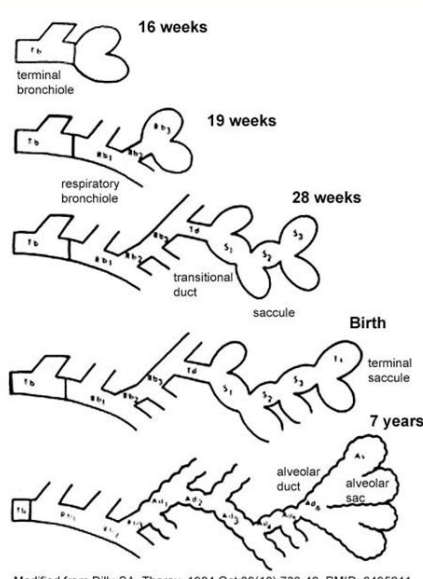
## Introduction

The relevant morphological features of the functioning lung are a large gas exchange surface area, a thin air-blood barrier, a surfactant system, a conductive airway tree and a set of vascular tubes feeding the venous and removing the arterial blood. In normal development of the lung all components are formed in a well-orchestrated but complex manner – a process complicated by the fact that the lungs are housed in the thorax, the development of which also influences lung formation and lung dimensions.

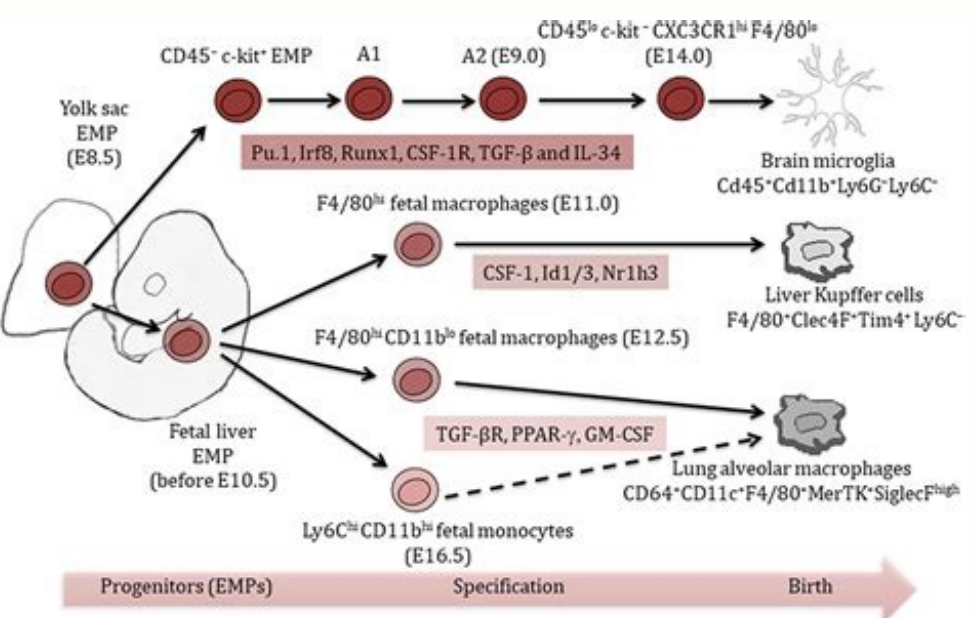
Although the morphology of lung development has been rather well described in the past and molecular biology has brought new and interesting insights for views, see 1, 2], we must pessimistically say that we know barely a few percent of the control and regulation mechanisms of lung development, and the important cellular interplay remains still largely unknown as well.

KARGER  
Postfach 8000, 3000, 3120  
E-Mail: karger@karger.ch  
www.karger.com

Prof. Peter H. Burri, MD  
Institute of Anatomy, University of Bern  
Foldingweg 1, CH-3000 Bern, Switzerland  
Tel: +41 31 412 1111, Fax: +41 31 412 1887  
E-Mail: burri@anatomie.unibe.ch



▲ Subdivisions and structures of individual pulmonary airways with comparative sections of a medium-sized bronchus and a bronchiole.



Meaning of alveolar. Can you grow more alveoli. What are alveolar.

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