

A medical ventilator (or simply ventilator in context) is a mechanical ventilator, a machine designed to move breathable air into and out of the lungs, to provide breathing for a patient who is physically unable to breathe, or breathing insufficiently.

While modern ventilators are computerized machines, patients can be ventilated with a simple, hand-operated bag valve mask.

Ventilators are chiefly used in intensive care medicine, home care, and emergency medicine (as standalone units) and in anesthesia (as a component of an anesthesia machine).

Medical ventilators are sometimes colloquially called “respirators,” a term which stems from commonly used devices in the 1950s (particularly the “Bird Respirator”). However, in modern hospital and medical terminology, these machines are never referred to as respirators, and use of “respirator” in this context is now a deprecated anachronism which signals technical unfamiliarity.

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