

# COPD

Living With Long-Term Lung Disease

**COPD** is a lung disease that makes it harder to breathe. Doctors can help people with COPD **feel better, live more active lives, and slow the damage to their lungs.**

The earlier that COPD is diagnosed—the better the results of treatment.



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## Learn About COPD

COPD is a common lung disease. It stands for Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease:

- **Chronic** means it won't go away.
- **Obstructive** means partly blocked.
- **Pulmonary** means lungs.
- **Disease** means sickness.

The airways are tubes that carry air in and out of the lungs. People with COPD have airways that are narrowed and blocked due to damage. This makes it harder to breathe. Once airways are damaged, they can't be repaired. But, by working with your doctor, you may be able to slow airway damage.

COPD includes a few lung conditions. Two of the most common are:

- **Chronic bronchitis.** This disease occurs when the lining of the airways gets red and full of mucus. Mucus can clog the airways and make it hard to breathe.
- **Emphysema.** This disease happens when air sacs at the end of the airways break down. Air can't pass through damaged air sacs, which makes it hard to breathe.

Many people with COPD have both of these conditions.

This brochure will help you learn about COPD. You'll find out about treatment options. You'll also read about lifestyle changes you can make to help you manage the disease.

## Know the symptoms of COPD

Common COPD signs and symptoms include:

- Cough that doesn't go away
- Coughing up a lot of mucus
- Shortness of breath, especially with exercise
- Wheezing (a whistling or squeaky sound when you breathe)
- Chest tightness

But you can have COPD even if you don't have symptoms. The disease is often silent. The more damaged your lungs are—the more severe your symptoms. Only a doctor can diagnose COPD and assess lung damage.

**Smoking causes most cases of COPD.** If you quit smoking, you can reduce COPD symptoms. A smoker is much more likely than a nonsmoker to die of COPD.

COPD has other causes, too. These include:

- Being exposed to other people's smoke
- Exposure to air pollution at work and outdoors
- Family history

Although there is no cure for COPD, **treatment and lifestyle changes can help control your symptoms.** This can help you feel better and be more active. The earlier COPD is diagnosed—the better the results of treatment.

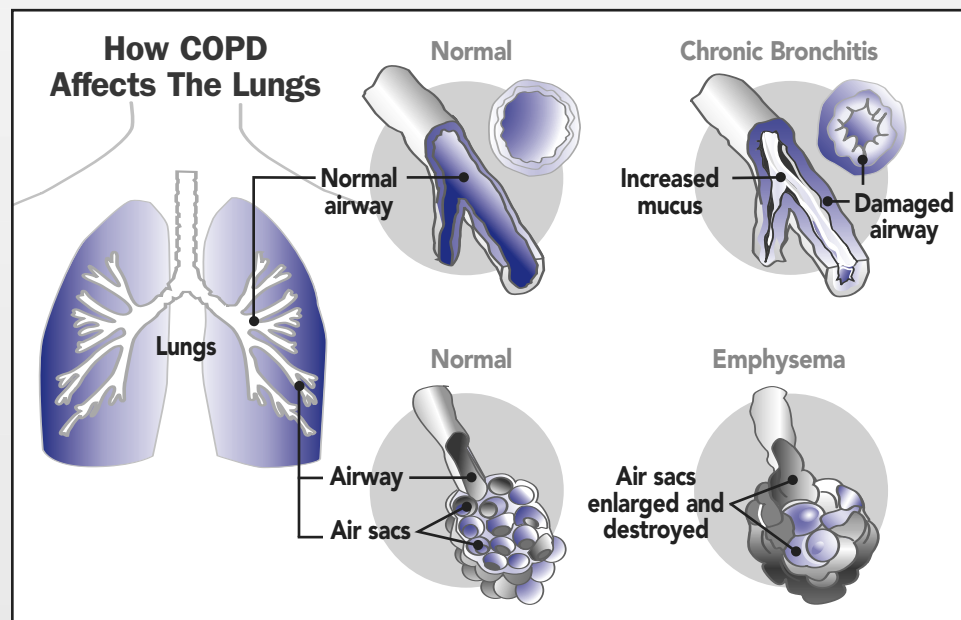


## You Can Slow Lung Damage

In your lungs, there are airways (tubes) that lead to air sacs. In healthy lungs, the airways are clear and open. When you breathe in, the air sacs fill up with air. When you breathe out, the air goes out of them.

COPD makes it harder to breathe. This is because airways and air sacs are damaged.

The damage to your airways and lungs is permanent. But there are things you can do to feel better and slow the damage. If you have COPD and smoke, the best thing you can do is stop smoking.



## Take The COPD Self-Test

This quiz can help your doctor decide if you have COPD.

Do you cough several times most days?

Yes  No

Do you bring up phlegm or mucus most days?

Yes  No

Do you get out of breath more easily than others your age?

Yes  No

Are you older than 40?

Yes  No

Are you a current smoker or an ex-smoker?

Yes  No

If you answer yes to three or more questions, you may have COPD. Talk with your doctor. Ask if you should have a simple breathing test to check your lungs.

If COPD is found early, there are steps you can take to prevent further lung damage and make you feel better!





## Diagnosing COPD

To diagnose your symptoms, your doctor:

- Will ask you about your breathing and your health.
- Will ask about your home and the places you've worked. This will tell him or her if you may have been exposed to things that could cause COPD, or make it worse.
- May give you a breathing test to see how well your lungs work. The test is used to help diagnose COPD and other lung conditions. It's called spirometry.



▼  
**Your doctor may give you a breathing test to see how well your lungs work.**

**You may not want to see the doctor because you may think your symptoms are due to:**

- Smoking
- Age
- Lack of exercise
- A cold or virus

**Many people might delay seeing the doctor because they:**

- Are ashamed that they caused the symptoms by smoking.
- Are afraid the doctor will have bad news.
- Think that nothing can help them.
- Don't want to be lectured about unhealthy habits (smoking, weight, exercise).

It's important to get treated early. You may not have symptoms until a great deal of lung damage has occurred.

**Get diagnosed early!**



## Work With Your Doctor

Your doctor can help you improve your symptoms and slow damage to your lungs. Treatment may improve lung function, so you can:

- Breathe better.
- Cough less.
- Feel better.

### Tips for getting the most out of your doctor visit:

- See your doctor regularly. Schedule your next appointment while you're at the doctor's office. This way you won't forget.
- Before you go, write down any questions or topics you want to discuss.
- Bring along a friend or loved one for support.
- Keep track of your condition and symptoms, so you can discuss them with your doctor. It may help to keep a daily journal of how you feel.



▼  
**Your doctor can help you control your symptoms and slow the damage to your lungs.**

## Manage COPD

These steps can help you manage the symptoms of COPD. When your symptoms are controlled, you may be able to feel better and be more active:

### Medical care

- Take your medicine the way the doctor says to take it.
- Go to the doctor at least twice a year for checkups. Ask if you can get a flu shot.
- Go to the hospital or doctor right away if your breathing gets bad.

### Healthy lifestyle

- Don't smoke.
- Eat a healthy diet, exercise, and try to avoid things that trigger your symptoms.
- Drink lots of fluids to help you loosen mucus.

### Around the house

- Use an air conditioner. This may make the air less humid, so you can breathe better. Change the air filters often.
- Cook near an open door or window, so smoke and strong smells can get out. If you heat with wood or kerosene, keep a door or window open to get rid of fumes.
- Close the windows and stay at home when there is a lot of pollution or dust outside.



## Take Medicine As Prescribed

Medicine is key to helping you control your COPD symptoms.

There are many COPD medicines. There are treatments that:

- **Open your airways to help make breathing easier.**
- **Fight airway swelling and decrease mucus.**

Some are used as needed, when you're short of breath. These are called "**quick-relief**" treatments.

Others are taken daily to help make breathing easier long term. These are called "**maintenance**" treatments. Your doctor may want you to take these medicines daily even when you feel better.

Most of these medicines are inhaled. Inhaled treatments go into your lungs where they're needed.

- To take inhaled medicines, you might use a small handheld device. It's called an inhaler.
- Or, you might use a machine. The machine turns liquid medicine into a mist that you breathe. It's often used to treat people with more severe COPD.

Your doctor will tell you how to take your medicine. **Follow his or her instructions with care**, so that your lungs get the right amount of medicine.

**Your doctor will prescribe treatment** based on your symptoms and needs. Keep track of your COPD symptoms. Work closely with your doctor. It's the best way to help make sure that your treatment is right for you.



▼ **Most COPD medicines are inhaled, so that treatment gets right to the lungs, where it's needed.**



## Stop Smoking

Stopping smoking can improve your symptoms and help slow the damage to your lungs. **It's never too late to quit.** This countdown\* may help:

<b>5 days before your quit day</b>	Tell your friends and family you're quitting. Stop buying cigarettes.
<b>4 days before</b>	Come up with other things to hold in your hand besides a cigarette. Think of habits to change.
<b>3 days before</b>	Plan how to spend the money you'll save when you stop buying cigarettes. Think who you can call for support.
<b>2 days before</b>	Buy a nicotine patch or nicotine gum. Or, see your doctor to get medicine to help you quit.
<b>1 day before</b>	Put away lighters and ashtrays. Throw out cigarettes and matches. Clean your clothes to get rid of the smell of smoke.
<b>Quit day</b>	Keep busy. Remind family and friends that this is your quit day. Give yourself a treat or do something special.
<b>Smoke-free</b>	Congratulations!

\*From the US Surgeon General's Office.

If you "slip" and do smoke, don't give up. Set a new date to get back on track. Many people who quit with success needed to try more than once.

### Get support

There are resources to help you stop smoking. Talk with your doctor. He or she may prescribe a medicine to help you quit. You can also buy nicotine patches or gum without a prescription. They may help you reduce your cravings for cigarettes.

There are also organizations and programs designed to help you quit, such as:

**American Lung Association**  
(800) LUNGUSA

**National Network of Tobacco Cessation Quitlines**  
(800) QUITNOW (800) 784-8669

**QuitNet®**  
QuitNet® is the Web's first quit-smoking site.  
[www.quitnet.com/](http://www.quitnet.com/)



▼  
***If you have COPD and still smoke, the best thing you can do for your lungs is to stop smoking.***



## Eat Healthy

Lung infections are illnesses that can lead to a hospital stay for people with COPD. **To keep your body strong, eat a healthy diet.**

If you're overweight, your doctor may want you to lose weight. It's harder to breathe and be active if you're overweight. If you're too thin, your doctor may want you to gain weight.

### To follow a healthy diet:

- Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables.
- Eat protein foods, like meat, fish, eggs, milk, and soy.
- Control the sodium (salt) in your diet. Eating too much salt causes the body to keep or retain too much water, which can make it harder to breathe.
- Drink at least 6 to 8 eight-ounce glasses of non-caffeinated beverages each day to keep mucus thin and easier to cough up. Some people with COPD who also have heart problems might need to limit their fluids, so be sure to follow your doctor's guidelines.

### When you eat:

- If you are short of breath when you eat, slow down.
- Talk less when you eat.
- If you feel full easily, eat smaller meals more often.

## Get Stronger

Being active is an important aspect of managing COPD. Exercise can **make the muscles that help you breathe stronger.** Before starting an exercise program, talk with your doctor about your plan to be sure that it is safe.

- Try to exercise at least three times a week.
- Start slowly and exercise for just a little while.
- Increase the time you're active, when you exercise each day, and how fast you exercise.
- Walking for 20 minutes is a good way to start if you can.

A program called **pulmonary rehabilitation** may help you improve your breathing. You may hear it called "pulmonary rehab." This may help you maintain fitness levels and get more control of your breathing. It may include walking, stationary bicycling, water exercise, or simple aerobics. Pulmonary rehab will also help you learn about your disease and follow a healthy lifestyle.

Ask your doctor if pulmonary rehab may be right for you. He or she may refer you to a program at your local hospital.



▼ ***Being active can make the muscles that help you breathe stronger. Talk with your doctor about an exercise program that's right for you.***





## Get The Most From Life

COPD can affect many parts of your life. This can include daily activities, hobbies, travel, and relationships. If you have COPD, you may find that it's hard to do some of the things you used to enjoy.

Effective treatment can help you control your symptoms, feel better, and get more out of every day! Work with your doctor to find treatment that's right for you. These tips may also help:

- **Do things slowly.** Don't rush!
- **Put things you need in places that are easy to reach** in the kitchen, bathroom, and bedroom.
- **Find simple ways to cook, clean, and do other chores.** Use a small table or cart on wheels to move things around. Use a pole or tongs with long handles to help reach things.
- **Keep your clothes loose,** so you can breathe. Wear clothes and shoes that are easy to put on.
- **Ask people to help you move things** in your home, so you will not need to climb stairs as often.

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