

Living with COPD

You can take steps to manage your symptoms and slow the progress of your COPD...

Quitting smoking is the most important step you can take to treat COPD.

Talk to your health care providers about programs and products that can help you quit.

Avoid other lung irritants:

- ✔ Secondhand smoke
- ✔ Air pollution
- ✔ Chemical fumes and dust
- ✔ Keep irritants out of your home, keep your windows closed and stay home when there is a lot of air pollution or dust outside
- ✔ Avoid extremes in weather (too hot or too cold)
- ✔ Avoid infection – stay away from others who are sick. Practice good hand washing and encourage others to do the same



Get ongoing care:

- ✔ Take all your medications as your doctor prescribes
- ✔ Make sure to refill your prescriptions before they run out
- ✔ Talk to your healthcare provider about the flu and pneumonia vaccines



Manage COPD and its symptoms:

- ✔ Do activities slowly
- ✔ Put items that you need often in one place that is easy to reach
- ✔ Find simple ways to cook, clean and do other chores
- ✔ Ask for help moving things around in your house so that you won't need to climb stairs as often
- ✔ Keep clothing loose and wear clothes and shoes that are easy to put on and take off



Prepare for emergencies:

- ✔ Know when to seek medical attention
- ✔ Call your doctor if you notice that your symptoms are worsening or if you have signs or infection such as a fever
- ✔ Keep phone numbers handy for your doctor, hospital and someone who can take you for medical care
- ✔ Keep a list of your current medicines handy



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COPD (Chronic Obstructive Disease) is a progressive disease that makes it hard to breathe. “Progressive” means the disease gets worse over time. There is no cure for COPD however, *treatments and lifestyle changes* can help you feel better, stay more active and slow the progress of the disease.

Other names for COPD: Chronic Bronchitis, Chronic Obstructive Airway Disease, Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease, Emphysema

Causes: Long term exposure to lung irritants that damage the lungs and the airways. The most common irritant that causes COPD is cigarette smoke. Other irritants include secondhand smoke, air pollution and chemical fumes and dust for the environment or workplace

Signs and symptoms:

- ✔ An ongoing cough or cough that produces large amounts of mucus (smokers cough)
- ✔ Shortness of breath, especially with physical activity
- ✔ Wheezing (a whistling or squeaky sound when you breathe)
- ✔ Chest tightness
- ✔ Frequent colds or flu
- ✔ A bluish color on your lips due to low blood oxygen level and shortness of breath

Contact your Doctor when:

- ✔ You are having a hard time catching your breath or talking
- ✔ Your lips or fingernails turn blue or gray
- ✔ You are not mentally alert
- ✔ Your heartbeat is very fast
- ✔ Your symptoms are getting worse

Goals of treatment include:

- ✔ Relieving your symptoms
- ✔ Slowing the progress of the disease
- ✔ Improving your exercise tolerance (your ability to stay active)
- ✔ Preventing and treating complications
- ✔ Improving your overall health