

What is COPD?

COPD, or Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, is a disease of the lungs. It is caused when your airways become blocked, making it hard to breathe.

- **“Chronic” means long-term.**
- **“Obstructive” refers to breathing that is partly blocked.**
- **“Pulmonary” means that it is a disease of the lungs.**

Symptoms of COPD

Most people start to notice shortness of breath or a morning cough that brings up mucus. Many people do not know they have COPD until they have a bad attack of bronchitis. Symptoms of COPD include:

- **Shortness of breath, or feeling like you can’t breathe**
- **Constant cough**
- **Heavy sputum (mucus) production**
- **Wheezing**

How can I Manage COPD?

Although COPD cannot be cured, it can be controlled by:

- Quitting smoking. If possible, ask people around you not to smoke too.
- Taking prescribed medicines.
- Preventing infections. Wash your hands often and avoid people who have colds, flu, sore throats or sinus infections.
- Special breathing exercises.
- Getting a flu shot every year.
- Learning as much as you can about COPD and your medicines.
- Avoiding exposure to irritants in the air. Irritants that can make COPD worse are
 - Air pollution, such as exhaust and gas fumes
 - Strong odors or fumes such as perfume, paints, cleaning products, or smoke from fireplaces.
- Weather changes. When it is cold or windy, cover your nose with a scarf. When it’s humid, try to stay in air-conditioned places.

Breathing exercises can help clear your lungs and get more air. Try the following exercises:

1. Pursed-lip breathing
 - Inhale slowly through your nose until your lungs fill with air.
 - Pucker your lips as if you are going to kiss someone.
 - Breathe out slowly while keeping your lips puckered.
2. Holding your breath
 - Breathe in.
 - Hold your breath for 3-4 seconds.
 - Breathe out.
3. Breathing from your diaphragm
 - Relax your shoulders.
 - Put one hand on your stomach.
 - Suck in your stomach muscles.
 - Breathe out with puckered lips.
 - Repeat 2-3 times and rest for two minutes.
 - Repeat several times a day.
 - Push your stomach out as you breathe in through your nose.

Save Energy When Sitting and Standing

Standing takes less energy if you lean your chest forward and rest your hands on your thighs. When you sit, support your feet, lean your chest forward, and rest your elbows on your knees and your chin in your hands.

Eating and COPD

A person with COPD may need more energy to breathe than someone without COPD. So it is vital to eat a healthy diet to store energy.

- Eat 5 or 6 small meals a day.
- Use fast, easy recipes and cook more than one meal at a time to save time and energy.
- Cut your food up into bite-size pieces. The less energy you spend chewing, the better.
- If you are taking long-term steroids, eat and drink more dairy foods

Exercise and COPD

Exercise will keep your muscles from getting tired as quickly. This means even daily chores will be easier because you'll have more energy and be able to do things longer. Also, exercise will keep your spirits up, improve your sense of well-being and help reduce stress.

COPD can change from day to day and from season to season. Infections, smog and smoking can make your symptoms more severe during certain times of the year. Make sure to speak with your doctor about medications, breathing techniques and lifestyle changes that can help you breathe better.

Can you read this? If not, we can have someone help you read it.
For free help, please call us at 1-800-391-2000.