

HealthyActions

Achieving Your Goals for Healthy Living



Control COPD: Stop Smoking

Did you know? COPD is the 4th leading cause of death in the United States. Nine of every 10 deaths due to COPD are caused by smoking.¹

Airways

Tubes that carry air in and out of your lungs.

Air sacs

Where oxygen goes when you breathe. Your air sacs transfer oxygen to your blood so that your body can use it.

Chronic Bronchitis

(bron-kie-tus)—Your airways are swollen. You have more mucus. You get more infections.

Emphysema

(em-fuh-zee-muh)—The air sacs in your lungs are damaged or destroyed. Your lungs become less elastic.

What Happens to Your Lungs and Airways When You Smoke?

Here's what happens to your lungs and airways when you smoke:

- **You damage or destroy air sacs in your lungs.** Healthy air sacs are elastic. They stretch when you breathe in, like a balloon. When you breathe out, they bounce back into shape. When air sacs are damaged, they cannot stretch or bounce back into shape. Your body cannot make new air sacs. Your body has to work harder to breathe. You start to feel tired and short of breath.

- **You damage or destroy the cilia (sil-ee-uh) that line your airways and lungs.** Cilia are tiny hairs. They act like a broom to sweep things out of your lungs. If you smoke, the tar from cigarette sticks to your cilia. Then they cannot move well. Dirt, chemicals, and germs stay in your lungs. Mucus builds up. You have to cough a lot to clear your lungs and airways.

When these things happen, your airways are partly blocked. And that's what COPD is.

What Is COPD?

COPD stands for **C**hronic **O**bstructive **P**ulmonary **D**isease.

- **Chronic**—It won't go away.
- **Obstructive** (ub-struck-tiv)—Partly blocked.
- **Pulmonary** (pull-mun-airy)—In your lungs.
- **Disease**—Sickness.

COPD can mean either chronic bronchitis or emphysema.



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Pulmonary rehabilitation (rehab)—A program that may help you live better with COPD.

Stop-Smoking Help— Day or Night

You can call a national stop-smoking quitline to get help. The number is toll-free:
1-800-784-8669.²



What Are Symptoms of COPD?

You can have COPD for a long time and not know it. You may not notice symptoms until they keep you from doing things you want to do.

Symptoms of COPD include:

- Constant coughing. People sometimes call this “smoker’s cough.”
- Shortness of breath when you do activities you used to be able to do.
- Lots of mucus.
- Feeling like you can’t breathe. Feeling like you can’t get enough air.
- Wheezing.

You Are at Risk for COPD if You Smoke

If you smoke, you are at risk for COPD. Here are things you should do to preserve your lung health:

- See your doctor right away.** Do not wait until you have breathing problems or a cough that lasts a long time. Discuss your concerns and any symptoms. Your doctor will use spirometry (spi-raw-muh-tree) testing to see if you have COPD. The test is easy to do. You blow hard into a machine called a spirometer (spi-raw-muh-tur). The machine measures how well your lungs are working.
- Stop smoking.** This is the most important thing you can do to prevent or manage COPD. Ask your doctor to help you quit. Ask about counseling or support groups. Ask about medicines that can help you quit. Lots of people have to try many times before they quit smoking for good. Don’t give up!

References

1. CDC. “2004 Surgeon General’s Report. Smoking among Adults in the United States: Respiratory Health.” Available at: http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/sgr/sgr_2004/highlights/4.htm. Accessed June 24, 2007.
2. National Network of Tobacco Cessation Quitlines. Available at: http://smokefree.gov/pop_800.html. Accessed June 26, 2007.