

HealthyActions

Achieving Your Goals for Healthy Living



Treating COPD Matters

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)—

COPD can mean either chronic bronchitis (bron-kie-tus) or emphysema (em-fuh-zee-muh). If you have chronic bronchitis, your airways are swollen. You have more mucus. You get more infections. If you have emphysema, the air sacs in your lungs are damaged or destroyed. Your lungs become less elastic. COPD does not go away.

What Is a Spirometry Test?

A spirometry (spi-raw-muh-tree) test is a breathing test that takes less than a minute. It is a test of your lung health. It measures how much air your lungs can hold. It also measures how much air you can breathe out.

Why Is Spirometry Done?

Spirometry is done when you are at risk for having a lung disease. The test will show how well your lungs are working. If your lungs are not working as well as they should, the test will help identify what lung disease you have. The test will also show how bad your disease is.

How Is Spirometry Done?

Your doctor or nurse will explain and show how to breathe through a tube:

- How to put your lips around the mouthpiece of the spirometer.
- How to blow into the mouthpiece.

Perform the test like this^{1,2}:

- Sit down.
- Loosen tight clothing.
- Put on a nose clip.
- Raise your chin a little.
- Breathe in fully.
- Seal your lips around the mouthpiece.
- Blow as hard and fast as you can until your lungs are empty. This step must last at least 6 seconds.
- Breathe in again.
- Relax.
- Repeat the test at least two more times.

It might take you a few tries to do the test right. That's okay! The important thing is to get results that show the best you can do. You need three good results. If you start to feel dizzy, you can rest longer between tests.



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Smoking and Lung Disease. COPD is the 4th leading cause of death in the United States. Almost all COPD is caused by smoking.³



What Do the Results Mean?

The results will show how well your lungs work. The results will be numbers and possibly pictures. Ask your doctor to explain both to you.

Your results may be normal. But if you smoke, you have a high risk for getting a lung disease. If you stop smoking, your chances will be *much* less.

Your results may show that you have chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). The results will also show how severe your disease is.

Your results may show that you have a different lung disease, such as asthma. You may need more tests to know for sure.

If you have a lung disease, you may need to take medicine every day to help you breathe better. Be sure to take it the way your doctor tells you to. Exercises can also help you feel better.

Your doctor may talk with you about pulmonary rehabilitation (**re-hab-bil-uh-tay-shun**). A pulmonary rehab program may help you live better with COPD. You learn how to breathe better. You become more fit. You train your mind and muscles to get the most out of your lungs.

If you have COPD or another lung disease, the most important thing you can do is to stop smoking. Talk to your doctor about ways to help you quit.

References

1. National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. *NIOSH Spirometry Training Guide*. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2004-154c/pdfs/2004-154c.pdf>. Accessed June 25, 2007.
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3. CDC. "2004 Surgeon General's Report. Smoking among Adults in the United States: Respiratory Health." Available at: http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/sgf/sgf_2004/highlights/4.htm. Accessed June 24, 2007.