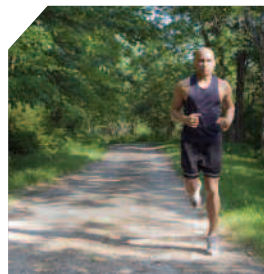


HealthyActions

Achieving Your Goals for Healthy Living



What Is Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease?

Did you know? COPD is the 4th leading cause of death in the United States.¹

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 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.

Healthy airways and air sacs in the lungs are elastic. They stretch when you breathe in, like a balloon. When you breathe out, they bounce back into shape.

If you have COPD:

- The walls of your airways are thick and swollen.
- Your airways are squeezed by small muscles around them.
- Your airways make mucus that you cough up.
- The air sacs in your lungs cannot stretch very much when you breathe in. Your air sacs cannot bounce back into shape when you breathe out.

When these things happen, your airways are partly blocked. It is harder for air to get in and out. Your lungs may feel very full.

COPD develops slowly. Over time, it becomes harder and harder for you to breathe. COPD cannot be cured. You can do things to manage the symptoms.



What Is Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease?

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

What to Do if You Have COPD

- **Stop smoking.** Ask your doctor for help to stop smoking.
- **Take any medicines the way your doctor tells you to.** Medicine can make it easier for you to breathe.
- **Get vaccines.** Get a flu shot every year. Ask your doctor if you should get a pneumonia (nuh-moan-yuh) vaccine.
- **Strengthen your body.** Ask your doctor about exercises that are good for you. Ask about pulmonary rehabilitation (re-hab-bil-uh-tay-shun). Eat healthy foods to be at a healthy weight.

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 things 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.

Who Is at Risk?

Your chances of having COPD are greater if:

- You are age 40 or older.
- You smoke. Nine out of every 10 deaths due to COPD are caused by smoking.¹

- You breathe in other things that hurt your lungs, such as:
 - Fumes from chemicals.
 - Dust.
 - Fumes from cooking stoves or heaters.
 - Air pollution.
 - Second-hand smoke.

What to Do if You Are at Risk

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 have you do a spirometry (spi-raw-muh-tree) test. 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.

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.