

# What is COPD?

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease or COPD is a lifelong lung disease. COPD makes it hard to breath. If you have COPD, you might be coughing up mucus from your lungs. Long term cigarette smoking is almost always the cause of COPD. It takes many years for COPD to develop before a person needs/seeks medical help. Usually the symptoms of the disease start between 50 – 70 years of age.

## **COPD is often a mix of two diseases:**

1. **Chronic Bronchitis:** The airways that carry oxygen into the lungs become red and swollen from making mucus. This causes the airways to get smaller and makes it harder to breath.
2. **Emphysema:** The air sacs in the lungs become damaged and air pockets develop there. This makes it difficult for air to exit from the lungs.

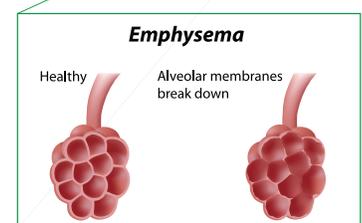
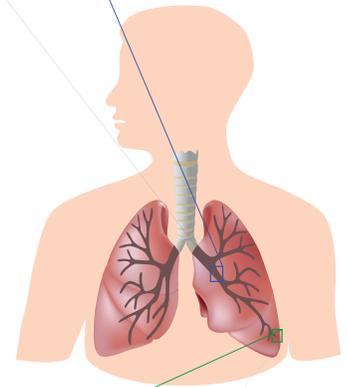
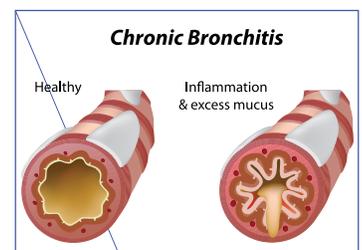
If you smoke – STOP! If you smoked at one time, talk to your Doctor or Nurse Practitioner.

COPD cannot be cured. But it can be managed by you and your primary care doctor or nurse practitioner so you can live a normal life.

## **Symptoms of COPD are:**

- Coughing with or without mucus
- Fatigue (feeling tired most of the time)
- Many breathing infections (colds, influenza, bronchitis)
- Shortness of breath (hard to catch your breath)
- Wheezing (sounds like a whistle when you breath out)

## Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)



**There are ways to manage your COPD so you can live a normal life:**

- If you smoke, QUIT!
- Talk to your Doctor or Nurse Practitioner
- You might have a simple breathing test called spirometry. This test measures how well air moves out of your lungs. You may need to have this test more than once to see how well your COPD is managed.
- Eat healthy. The right foods can give you energy and help keep you well.
  - Tips for eating well:
    - Eat a variety of foods, especially fruit, vegetables and whole grains
    - Avoid greasy food and junk food
    - Limit salt, alcohol and caffeine
- Stay at a healthy weight. Being overweight makes your heart and lungs work harder
- Get regular physical activity. Being active helps strengthen your muscles and gives you energy
- Make sure you talk to your doctor about getting the flu and pneumonia vaccines
- Stay away from pollutants like second hand smoke, dust and chemicals
- Wash your hands with soap and water often

There are medications you can take to manage your COPD. Everyone with COPD does not take the same meds. Some can be breathed in. Others are taken as a pill. Sometime you might need additional oxygen. You and your doctor or nurse practitioner will find the right meds to manage your COPD.

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**If you have any questions about COPD, call Enrollee Services. The phone number to call is 866-871-2305 or talk to your primary care provider.**

**Call 9-1-1 for emergency help if you or someone else:**

- Can't breathe all of a sudden (breathlessness) or are unable to catch their breath
- Has sudden chest pain
- Has lips and fingers that are turning blue
- Feels confused, agitated or drowsy

**REFERENCES**

**American Lung Association**  
1301 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Suite 800  
Washington, DC 20004  
[www.Lungusa.com](http://www.Lungusa.com)

**National Heart, Lung, Blood Institute NHLBI Health Information Center**  
P.O. Box 30105  
Bethesda, MA 20824  
[www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov)

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**  
CDC  
1600 Clifton Rd  
Atlanta, GA 3033  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

**[www.ccaillinois.com](http://www.ccaillinois.com)**