



Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

What is COPD?

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a chronic inflammatory disease that causes airflow blocked in the lungs. Typically, this disease is caused by prolonged exposure to irritating gases or particulate matter; the most common being cigarette smoke.

Signs and symptoms

- Difficulty breathing
- Cough
- Production of mucus (sputum)
- Wheezing (difficult breathing with a sound in the chest)
- Chest tightness

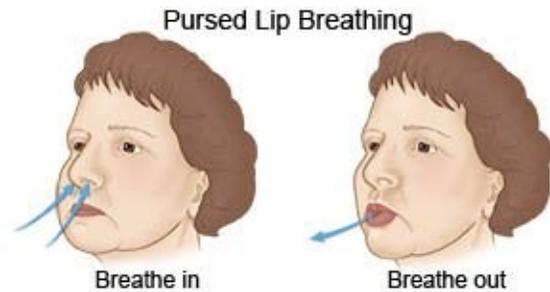
Treatment

Based on your condition, your doctor will work with you to design a plan of care. This plan may include:

1. Using medicines to open the airways or decrease inflammation in the lungs and relieve certain symptoms.
 - Fast-acting medications relieve symptoms faster. These are known as rescue medications.
 - Long-acting medications control or prevent symptoms. These are known as maintenance medications.
2. Using extra oxygen will help you breathe easier and feel more alert. Check with your doctor first.
3. If none of the medications listed are helpful, your doctor may consider surgery. A lung reduction is a surgical procedure in which the damaged part of the lung is removed. A lung transplant is the replacement of the lung from a donor.

What to do to facilitate breathing?

- Take a deep breath in, through your nose. Slowly exhale through your mouth with pursed lips.
- Try to make the exhalation last twice as long as the inhalation. This will help you get as much air out of your lungs as possible. You can also practice this breathing pattern while bending over, picking up an object, climbing stairs, or exercising. This slows your breathing and will help you move more air in and out of your lungs.



- Avoid any triggers that make your symptoms worse, such as frequenting places with high altitudes or high humidity. Stay indoors on days when air pollution or pollen counts are high, or if it's very cold outside. Replace sprays with creams and ointments.
- Exercise daily. Be physically active for at least 20 minutes each day to increase your energy and decrease your shortness of breath. Talk to your doctor about the best exercise regimen for you.



How to control COPD and help prevent exacerbations?

A COPD exacerbation means that your symptoms suddenly get worse and can cause more damage to your lungs. COPD cannot be cured, but you can take the following steps to feel better and prevent flare-ups:

- Don't smoke and avoid cigarette smoke. Nicotine and other chemicals in cigarettes and cigars can cause lung damage and worsen COPD. Electronic cigarettes or smokeless tobacco still contain nicotine. Ask your doctor for information if you currently smoke and need help to quit.
- Go to your pulmonary rehab appointments as directed. Rehab is a program led by specialists (for example: a pulmonologist, a nutritionist, and an exercise therapist) who will help you learn to control your COPD and avoid the triggers that cause a flare.
- Use your medications as directed by your doctor. Acquire the refill of your medications before they run out, to avoid not being able to complete your doses.
- Protect yourself against germs. An infection in the lungs can create more mucus and make breathing more difficult. An infection can also create inflammation in the airways and prevent air from getting into them. You can lower your risk of an infection by doing the following:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water. Always have an antibacterial gel on hand to clean your hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth unless you have washed your hands first.
- Covering your mouth when you cough, or sneeze will not spread germs with your hands.



- Keep distance from people who are sick. If you are sick, stay away from other people as much as possible.
- Talk to your doctor about flu, pneumonia, and COVID-19 vaccines. Find out when vaccinations should be administered and, if necessary, boosters.
- Drink fluids as directed. The liquid will help keep your airways moist and help you cough more effectively. See how much fluid you should drink every day.

Call **9-1-1** if you feel dizzy, short of breath, and have chest pain.

Social and Emotional Aspect

For recommendations, tools, and resources on how you and your family can cope with emotional and physical concerns that arise during and after medical treatment, please visit your primary care physician or contact the following phone lines:

First Health Call

1-866-337-3338

TTY: 1-866-921-0101

APS Healthcare

787-641-9133

References:

COPD. (2022). Retrieved from: <https://www.drugs.com/cg/copd-chronic-obstructive-pulmonary-disease.html>

COPD. (2021) Retrieved from: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/es-es/diseases-conditions/copd/symptoms-causes/syc-20353679>

Prepared by licensed Health Educators.

Revised in May 2022.

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