



are you out of **breath?**

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a term that refers to progressive lung diseases, including emphysema and chronic bronchitis. Emphysema occurs when the air sacs in your lungs lose their elasticity and old air gets trapped in them. Chronic bronchitis is swelling and an increase in mucus production in the airway which can block air movement.

What Causes COPD?

- Smoking cigarettes, cigars / pipe, or exposure to second-hand smoke
- Breathing in fumes, chemicals, dust, or other irritants over a long period of time
- Genetic factors

What are Symptoms of COPD?

- Shortness of breath
- Coughing - with or without mucus
- Wheezing
- Tightness in the chest

Are there Tests for COPD?

There are tests that can be done when you develop COPD symptoms to confirm the diagnosis. Some of these tests are repeated over time to monitor if your COPD is getting worse. These tests include:

- Pulmonary function tests / Spirometry
- Finger tip oxygen test
- Blood test for oxygen and other gases
- Chest X-ray or CT scan

Here are a few things you can do to help manage your COPD and try to keep it from getting worse:

- Stop smoking
- Avoid second-hand smoke, dust, and fumes
- Use inhalers and take medications as prescribed
- Get flu and pneumonia vaccines
- Exercise and stay active
- Practice good nutrition
- Drink plenty of water
- Manage stress
- Keep yourself and your home clean; wash hands frequently

When Do I See a Doctor for COPD?

Seeing your doctor on a regular basis is part of your ongoing COPD care. Report any new or worsening symptoms to the doctor right away.

Tell your doctor about:

- Medication you are taking for your COPD
- Fever, chills, or night sweats
- Increased mucus production
- Change in color or presence of blood in mucus
- Trouble sleeping
- Shortness of breath, wheezing, or coughing
- Increased fatigue
- Decrease appetite

What Types of Breathing Techniques Can I Use?

There are several breathing & coughing techniques that can help clear out the airway so you can breathe a little easier. Ask your doctor or another healthcare professional to show you how to do:

- Pursed lip breathing
- Diaphragmatic breathing
- Clearing of the airway

know your **options**

Medications

Your doctor may order medications to help you breath easier. You may need pills, inhalers, or both.

Bronchodilators relax and open the airway to improve airflow and lesson shortness of breath.

- Long-Acting - used daily to help maintain open airways
- Short-Acting - used as needed for quick relief, if you are having difficulty breathing

Steroids reduce inflammation and swelling in the airways and cut down on mucus production.

Combination inhalers contain bronchodilators and a steroid or two different bronchodilators.

- Place inhaler in mouth in breath in deeply for three to five seconds as you spray the dose.
- Hold the medicine in your lungs for 10 seconds.
- Wait one minute before taking a second dose/puff, if it is ordered.
- Always rinse out your mouth and spit after using an inhaler that contains a steroid. This helps prevent thrush.

Managing Feelings

Living with a chronic health problem can sometimes lead to depression. Symptoms of depression include:

- No energy, motivation, or interest in activities
- Feeling down, blue, unhappy, or sad most days
- Eating or sleeping too little or too much
- Trouble concentrating
- Crying a lot
- Feeling like you'd be better off dead

If you have any of these symptoms, talk to your doctor about it right away.

You may request a call from a nurse at healthplan.org or call 1.800.624.6961 ext. 2217 or 6157.

