

# Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) refers to a group of diseases that cause airflow blockage and breathing-related problems. It includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis.

## Symptoms

Symptoms of COPD include:

- Frequent coughing or wheezing
- Excess phlegm, mucus, or sputum production
- Shortness of breath
- Trouble taking a deep breath

## Causes

In the United States, tobacco smoke is a key factor in the development and progression of COPD. Exposure to air pollutants in the home and workplace, genetic factors, and respiratory infections also play a role.

## What are the complications or effects of COPD?

Compared to adults without COPD, those with this disease are more likely to:

- Be unable to work.
- Have activity limitations like difficulty walking or climbing stairs.
- Have more emergency room visits or overnight hospital stays.
- Have other chronic diseases like arthritis, congestive heart failure, diabetes, coronary heart disease, stroke, or asthma.
- Report a fair or poor health status.
- Have increased confusion or memory loss.
- Need special equipment like portable oxygen tanks.
- Have depression or other mental or emotional conditions.
- Not engage in social activities like eating out, going to places of worship, going to group events, or getting together with friends or neighbors.

## How is COPD treated?

Treatment of COPD requires a careful and thorough evaluation by a physician. Treatment options that your physician may consider include:

- **Quit smoking.**
- **Avoid tobacco smoke and other air pollutants.**
- **Ask your doctor about pulmonary rehabilitation**, which is a personalized treatment program that teaches COPD management strategies to improve quality of life.
- **Take medication.** Symptoms, such as coughing or wheezing, can be treated with medication.
- **Avoid lung infections.** Lung infections can cause serious problems in people with COPD. Respiratory infections should be treated with antibiotics, if appropriate.
- **Use supplemental oxygen.**