



How can I Prevent COPD?

If you smoke, quit. The best thing you can do to prevent or slow the progression of the disease is to stop smoking. You should also limit your exposure to secondhand smoke, air pollution and workplace chemicals, all of which can cause COPD.

FAST FACT

80-90% of all COPD is caused by smoking. Smokers are ten times more likely to die from COPD.

Source: United States Department of Health and Human Services



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COPD



What is COPD?

COPD stands for Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease and is the leading cause of disability and the fourth leading cause of death in the United States, killing 117,000 people annually. COPD is a classification of lung diseases, which includes chronic bronchitis and emphysema, that make breathing extremely difficult. In patients with COPD, the airways of the lungs thicken, close and may also fill with mucus, thus reducing air flow. COPD can lead to weakness, exhaustion, loss of body weight, and heart failure.

FAST FACT

COPD is the 4th leading cause of death in the United States. More people die of COPD than either diabetes, influenza or Alzheimers disease.

Source: National Vital Statistics Report, 2002

Causes of COPD

80-90% of all COPD is caused by smoking and smokers are ten times more likely to die from COPD than non-smokers. People who had many lung infections as a child are also more likely to develop COPD when they are older. Other factors that can lead to the development of COPD include genetic predispositions and exposure to industrial wastes, air pollution or secondhand smoke.

Do I have COPD?

Often, an individual may have COPD for years before noticing any symptoms. However, as the disease progresses, a person with COPD may suffer from shortness of breath, wheezing, excess mucus, coughing, weakness, exhaustion, loss of body weight and bluish skin.

If you have any of these symptoms, there are some questions you should ask yourself.

Do you:

- Have a history of smoking or being exposed to secondhand smoke?
- Feel shortness of breath while doing routine activities?
- Have difficulty breathing and feel chest tightness in cold weather?
- Live in a high ozone/heavy smog area?
- Frequently have deep, wet coughs?
- Breathe in air pollution at work?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, then you should make an appointment with your doctor now. The earlier the diagnosis is made, the better you will be able to fight the disease.



A nurse administers a pulmonary function test to a patient exhibiting COPD symptoms.



Although there is no cure for COPD, with proper treatment, COPD patients can live full, active lives.

Treatment of COPD

Although there is no cure for COPD, with proper treatment, patients can live full, active lives. Doctor-prescribed medications can be of great help by opening up closed airways, reducing mucus and decreasing airway inflammation. Oxygen therapy can also help increase mobility.

Breathing exercises, a proper diet and a doctor-approved exercise regimen can help you to stay active and remain healthy. In addition, many healthcare providers offer pulmonary rehabilitation courses which teach patients to cope with the challenges posed by lung disease. Just because you have COPD does not mean that you cannot live a full life.