

# COPD

## What is COPD?

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease is an umbrella term for *chronic bronchitis* and *emphysema*, which is characterized by chronic obstruction (blocking or clogging) of the flow of air through the airways. COPD is permanent and progressive over time.

Chronic Bronchitis is an inflammation or irritation of the airways in the lungs, causing thick mucus to form in the airways. This mucus blocks the airways and makes it difficult for air to be inhaled and exhaled from the lungs.

Emphysema is a respiratory disease in which the air sacs (alveoli) are weakened and break down. As a result, the lung tissue loses elasticity, keeping the airways from fully expanding and contracting.

## What causes COPD?

1. Smoking is the number one cause of COPD
2. Occupational pollutants
3. Secondhand smoke
4. Frequent lung infections
5. Air Pollution
6. Hereditary factors

## What are the Symptoms?

1. Chronic cough
2. Shortness of breath
3. Chest tightness
4. Frequent lung infections
5. Wheeze
6. Increased mucus production

## How is COPD Diagnosed?

1. Chest x-ray
2. Cat scan of the chest
3. Pulmonary function testing
4. Arterial blood gas
5. Complete medical history and physical exam

## What is the Treatment?

1. Stop smoking
2. Get yearly flu shots
3. Use of bronchodilators
4. Pulmonary rehab
5. Steroid treatment
6. Oxygen therapy
7. Surgery

Treatment options vary for every patient. Discuss with your physician on which treatment option is right for you.

## Living With COPD:

1. Keep air in home clean (no smoke, fumes, or strong odors)
2. Keep windows closed and stay inside when there is a lot of pollution, humidity, on a very hot day, and when there is an ozone alert
3. Take meds as prescribed
4. Stay current on pneumonia vaccines and flu shots
5. Follow up with your physician regularly

