



ToYourHealth

WELCOA'S ONLINE GENERAL WELLNESS BULLETIN

COPD *Learn More Breathe Better*



Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a serious lung disease that over time, makes it hard to breathe. You may also have heard COPD called other names, like emphysema or chronic bronchitis. In people who have COPD, the airways—tubes that carry air in and out of your lungs—are partially blocked, which makes it hard to get the air out.

When COPD is severe, shortness of breath and other symptoms of COPD can get in the way of even the most basic tasks, such as doing light housework, taking a walk, even washing and dressing.

How Does COPD Affect Breathing?

The “airways” are the tubes that carry air in and out of the lungs through the nose and mouth. Healthy airways and air sacs in the lungs are elastic—they try to bounce back to their original shape after being stretched or filled with air, just the way a new rubber band or balloon does. This elastic quality helps retain the normal structure of the lung and helps to move the air quickly in and out.

What Are The Symptoms?

Many people with COPD avoid activities that they used to enjoy because they become short of breath more easily.

Symptoms of COPD include:

- ✓ Constant coughing, sometimes called “smoker’s cough”
- ✓ Shortness of breath while doing activities you used to be able to do
- ✓ Excess sputum production
- ✓ Feeling like you can’t breathe
- ✓ Not being able to take a deep breath
- ✓ Wheezing

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COPD develops slowly, and can worsen over time, so be sure to report any symptoms you might have to your doctor or health care provider as soon as possible, no matter how mild they may seem.

Getting Diagnosed

Everyone at risk for COPD who has cough, sputum production, or shortness of breath, should be tested for the disease. The test for COPD is called spirometry.

Spirometry can detect COPD before symptoms become severe. It is a simple, non-invasive breathing test that measures the amount of air a person can blow out of the lungs (volume) and how fast he or she can blow it out (flow). Based on this test, your doctor or health care provider can tell if you have COPD, and if so, how severe it is. The spirometry reading can help them to determine the best course of treatment.

TAKING ACTION

There are many things people at risk for COPD can do:

- Quit smoking
- Avoid exposure to pollutants
- Visit your doctor or health care provider on a regular basis
- Take precautions against seasonal flu

DID YOU KNOW?

- COPD is the 3rd leading cause of death in the United States and causes serious, long-term disability.
- COPD kills more than 120,000 Americans each year. That's one death every four minutes.
- More than 12 million people are diagnosed with COPD—An additional 12 million likely have COPD and don't even know it.



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