

What is COPD?

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a common disease affecting more than 16 million Americans. It is a condition in which the airways in the lungs become damaged, making it increasingly difficult for air to pass in and out. Doctors use the term COPD to describe two different diseases – emphysema and chronic bronchitis – because many people with COPD may have a combination of these two diseases.

The most common cause of COPD is cigarette smoking. Other causes include work-related dusts, chemicals, fumes, things in the environment like coal dust and silica. Injection drug users are at high risk of developing COPD.

What are the symptoms of COPD?

COPD usually causes no or mild symptoms at first. As the disease progresses, symptoms usually worsen. The most common symptoms include coughing and spitting up phlegm (mucus), wheezing and shortness of breath.



What to do if you have COPD:

The first and most important part of any treatment plan for COPD is for smokers to stop smoking. You can call the California smokers helpline at **1-800-662-8887 (1-800 NO BUTTS)** for free personalized telephone support from a trained counselor.

The best test to diagnose COPD is a type of pulmonary function test called spirometry. After the diagnosis of COPD is confirmed, spirometry is repeated over time to monitor the status of the disease and the effectiveness of treatment.

There is no cure for COPD. However many treatments are available for symptoms and complications of COPD. These medications are taken as needed when you feel short of breath and/or regularly. If you have breathing problems talk to a health care provider.



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COPD