



# Make *Yours* Healthy Choices!

## Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

[www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov)

### WHAT IS COPD?

COPD or Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease is a lung disease in which the lungs have been damaged. A person with COPD has partially obstructed airways or tubes which carry air in and out of the lungs, making it hard to get air through.

### COPD develops slowly.

Frequently, COPD is diagnosed in middle-aged or older people. It is the fourth leading cause of death in the US and throughout the world. There is no cure for COPD but there are things which can be done to help you feel better and slow the damage to the lungs. COPD is not contagious.

**Smoking** is the most common cause of COPD. Other activities which may irritate the lungs include: working around certain types of chemicals and breathing fumes for years, working in dusty environments over many years and heavy exposure to severe air pollution.



**If you suffer from COPD, please contact Delta Disease Education today. This confidential service is provided by your employer at no cost to you.**  
**800.380.0426**

### SYMPTOMS AND TREATMENT

The symptoms include:

- Cough
- Sputum (mucus) production
- Shortness of breath, especially with exercise
- Wheezing
- Chest tightness

The severity of the symptoms depends on how much of the lung has been damaged.

Treatment is based on whether your symptoms are mild, moderate or severe.

***Quitting smoking is the single most important thing you can do to slow the progress of the disease.***

### Goals of COPD Treatment:

- Relieve your symptoms
- Slow progress of the disease
- Improve exercise tolerance
- Prevent and treat complications
- Improve your overall health and quality of life

Treatment may include medications such as bronchodilators, steroids, flu shots and pneumococcal vaccines to avoid or reduce further complications. Depending on the level of damage, the physician may suggest a pulmonary rehab program. This program will coordinate exercise, physical therapy, disease management training, advice on diet and counseling.

### LIVING WITH COPD

You will need to stay away from people who smoke and smoking environments.

It is important to keep the air in your home as clean as possible. Some of the things you can do to keep the air in your home clean are:

- Keep smoke, fumes and strong smells out of your home
- If you are painting or fumigating for insects, do this when you will not be home
- Cook near an open door or window or keep an exhaust fan running while cooking
- If you heat with kerosene or wood, keep a door or window open
- Keep your windows and doors closed when the outside air quality is poor (heavy dust or severe air pollution)

### Other things to help you manage your COPD:

- If you are taking medications, to take them as directed and refill them so you do not run out.
- See your doctor at least twice a year.
- Get annual flu shot and pneumonia vaccines.
- Learn breathing exercises and include walking and exercise.\*
- Eat healthy foods which include lots of fruits and vegetables. Include plenty of protein foods like meat, fish, eggs, mild and soy.

\*As recommended by your physician.

**Note: This information is meant to complement the advice of your health care providers, not to replace it. Talk to your doctor if you have any health care concerns.**