

# Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

Take Control,  
Live Better





# COPD

COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) is a long-term illness that makes it hard to breathe. When you have COPD, air does not flow easily out of your lungs. You may be short of breath, cough a lot, and have a lot of mucus in your airways.

If you have emphysema or chronic bronchitis, you have COPD.

Over time, breathing problems get worse, and it gets harder to do everyday activities. You may be short of breath even when you do simple things like get dressed or fix a meal. It gets harder to eat or exercise, and breathing takes much more energy. People with COPD often lose weight and get weaker.

At times, your symptoms may suddenly flare up and get much worse. This is called a **COPD flare-up** or exacerbation.

A flare-up can range from mild to life-threatening. The longer you have COPD, the more severe these flare-ups will be.

COPD can lead to heart problems and to death. But you can make a difference in your health.

## What you can do

**The best thing you can do is to stop smoking.** COPD is almost always caused by smoking. Over time, breathing tobacco smoke irritates the airways and destroys the stretchy fibers in the lungs. Quitting is the only sure way to slow the disease. But it may also be the hardest step to take when you have COPD.



There are many other things you can do to stay as healthy as you can.

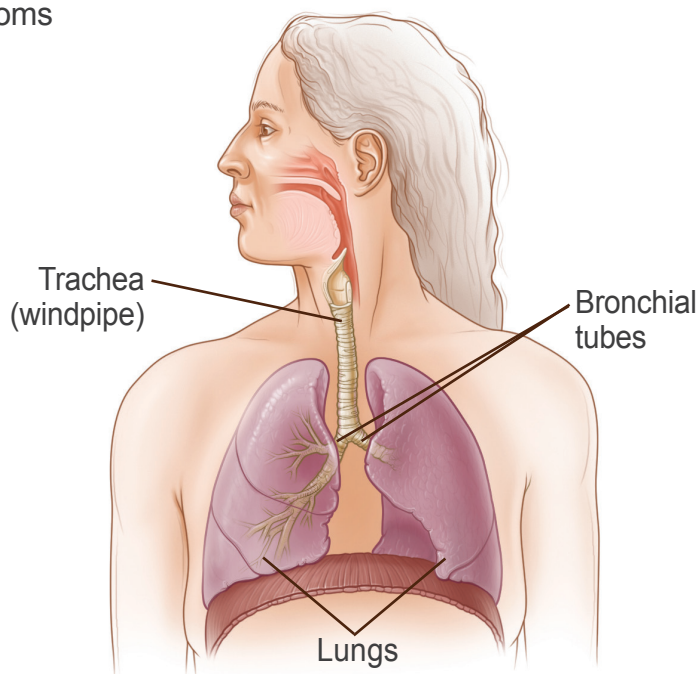
- ▶ **Take the medicines** your doctor prescribes.
- ▶ **Avoid things that can irritate your lungs**, such as smoke, pollution, and cold, dry air.
- ▶ **Take rest breaks** during the day.
- ▶ **Get regular exercise** to stay as strong as you can.
- ▶ **Eat well** so you can keep up your strength.
- ▶ **Learn special breathing techniques.**
- ▶ **Have regular checkups** with your doctor. Be sure to report any changes in your symptoms and whether you've had any flare-ups.

## When to call a doctor

**Call 911** if you have severe trouble breathing.

### Call your doctor if:

- ▶ You have shortness of breath or wheezing that is getting worse.
- ▶ You are coughing more deeply or more often than usual.
- ▶ You cough up blood.
- ▶ Swelling in your legs or belly gets worse.
- ▶ You have a fever.
- ▶ Your medicine does not seem to be working as well as it had been.



When you have COPD, the lungs and the tubes (trachea and bronchial tubes) leading to the lungs get damaged. This makes it hard to breathe.



# Quitting Smoking

Quitting smoking is the most important step you can take to feel better and live longer.

If you're thinking about quitting, you're already on your way. It may help to know that you don't have to quit smoking through willpower alone. There are:

- ▶ Treatments that can help with the physical effects of giving up smoking and nicotine, such as nicotine replacement products and medicines that don't have nicotine but can help you cope with cravings and mood swings.
- ▶ Resources that can help with the emotional side of quitting smoking. These include stop-smoking programs through your health plan, your local hospital, or the American Lung Association.

## Make a plan

For many people it helps to:

- ▶ **Set a quit date.** Pick a date within the next month. Give yourself time to get ready.
- ▶ **Plan.** Will you go to a class, join a support group, or use nicotine replacement or medicines? If you know you tend to smoke in certain situations, plan for ways to avoid them.
- ▶ **Quit.** Stick to your quit date. That day, get rid of cigarettes, ashtrays, and lighters.

## Did You Know?

It's never too late to quit. No matter how long you've smoked or how serious your COPD is, quitting smoking can help stop the damage to your lungs. Make your plan to quit today.

To help you get started, go to



go to [www.healthwise.net/patiented](http://www.healthwise.net/patiented) and enter **W970** into the search box.





# Treatment

COPD can't be cured, but treatment can help you feel better and improve your overall health.

## Medicines

COPD medicines reduce shortness of breath, control coughing and wheezing, and can prevent or reduce a flare-up. Most people with COPD find that medicine makes breathing easier.

COPD medicines usually come as an inhaler—a device that lets you breathe the medicine in through your mouth so it goes right to your airway and lungs.

Inhaled medicine works faster than the same medicine in a pill. An inhaler also lets you take less

medicine than you would if you took it as a pill. **It's important to use your inhaler correctly.**

If you're having trouble using an inhaler, talk to your doctor.

## Pulmonary rehabilitation

Pulmonary rehab for COPD combines different treatments to help you to:

- ▶ Lead a more active life.
- ▶ Reduce your symptoms.
- ▶ Improve your quality of life.
- ▶ Take an active part in your treatment.
- ▶ Stay out of the doctor's office and the hospital.

To learn about pulmonary rehabilitation, go to [www.healthwise.net/patiented](http://www.healthwise.net/patiented) and enter **G298** into the search box.





# How to Use a Metered-Dose Inhaler With a Spacer

1



After you place the inhaler into the spacer, hold the inhaler upright with the mouthpiece at the bottom.

2



Tilt your head back slightly, and breathe out slowly and completely.

3



Place the spacer's mouthpiece in your mouth.

4



Press down on the inhaler to spray one puff of medicine into the spacer and then start breathing in slowly (press first, then breathe in).

Rehab includes exercise programs, education about your disease and how to manage it, help with diet and other changes, and emotional support. Many people with COPD find these programs helpful.

Rehab won't reverse the damage to your lungs from COPD. But it will help you do your daily tasks, such as dressing, grocery shopping, and walking, more easily.

## Oxygen therapy

At some point you may need oxygen therapy. By boosting the oxygen in your blood, this treatment helps you breathe easier and gives you more energy. It may also help you live longer and stay out of the hospital.

You can use oxygen therapy while you move around and do daily tasks. You may breathe oxygen through a flexible plastic tube in your nostrils (nasal cannula), a face mask, or a tube put into your windpipe.

You can use an oxygen gas tank, liquid oxygen that comes in a small container, or an oxygen concentrator. Each has its pros and cons in terms of weight, cost, how much oxygen it holds, and how dangerous it is. (Don't use oxygen around a lit cigarette or an open flame.)

You may need oxygen only when you exercise or when you are asleep. Or you may need it all the time. Work with your doctor to decide what is best for you.

## If you get worse

Treatment for COPD is getting better all the time. But COPD is a disease that keeps getting worse and can be fatal. You and your doctor should talk about what types of treatment you want if sudden, life-threatening breathing problems occur.

This discussion may include writing an advance directive. This is a document that your doctor and family can use if you become unable to tell them what your wishes are.

To learn about using oxygen therapy at home, go to [www.healthwise.net/patiented](http://www.healthwise.net/patiented) and enter **L358** into the search box.







## Self-Care

There are a lot of things you can do on your own that can help you feel better and have more energy.

- ▶ **Eat regular, healthy meals.**
- ▶ **Try to exercise throughout the week.** Walking is a great way to start.
- ▶ **Take short rest breaks** when you are doing chores and other activities.

### Dealing with flare-ups

Sometimes your usual shortness of breath will suddenly get worse. You may start coughing more and have more mucus.

A COPD flare-up can be life-threatening. If you have one:

- ▶ Use your inhaler medicine first.

- ▶ If your symptoms don't get better after you use your medicine, have someone take you to the emergency room. Call 911 if you have to.

Do everything you can do to avoid flare-ups and stay out of the hospital:

- ▶ Take your medicines.
- ▶ Clear mucus from your lungs.
- ▶ Stay as healthy as you can.
- ▶ Avoid “triggers” like smoke, poor air quality, and chemicals. It's a good idea to know your triggers. You can use the “Identifying Your Triggers” chart on page 10 to remind yourself what to avoid. And you can write in other things that trigger flare-ups for you.

### Did You Know?

It's a good idea to get the flu vaccine each fall. It can keep you from getting infections that could put you in the hospital. Ask those you live and work with to do the same, so they don't get the flu and infect you. It's also a good idea to get a pneumococcal vaccine. Some people need two shots of this vaccine.

To learn about clearing your lungs, go to [www.healthwise.net/patiented](http://www.healthwise.net/patiented) and enter **T905** into the search box.



## Breathe clean air at home

Many things can make your symptoms worse or cause flare-ups. Some of these things are out of your control. But you can make your home a place where you can breathe easier.

- ▶ Don't let anyone smoke in your home. That means you too.
- ▶ If you have air-conditioning, use it so you don't have to open the windows. Fresh air may seem like a good idea, but air pollution and other outdoor triggers can make your COPD worse.
- ▶ Make sure that gas appliances are vented well and have tight-fitting doors. Check flues and chimneys for cracks that could let in fumes. Don't use an open fireplace or wood-burning stove; wood smoke is bad for your breathing.
- ▶ Don't use strong chemicals or aerosol sprays in your home, and don't mix cleaning products. Try natural cleaners like vinegar, lemon juice, boric acid, or baking soda.
- ▶ Reduce the dust in your house as much as you can.

## Identifying Your Triggers

My triggers (check off)	These things make my symptoms worse:
	Poor air quality, such as indoor or outdoor air pollution, smoke, or smog
	Pet hair, skin, or saliva
	Cigarette smoke
	Colds, flu, bronchitis, or pneumonia
	Dry, cold air
	Hot, humid air
	High altitudes
	Gases, particles, or fumes from wood or kerosene home heaters
	House dust mites
	Indoor mold
	Not taking my medicines
	Pollen
	Other
	Other

# Breathe Easier



## Pursed-lip breathing and breathing while bending

**Pursed-lip breathing** helps you breathe more air out so your next breath can be deeper. It makes you less short of breath and lets you exercise more.

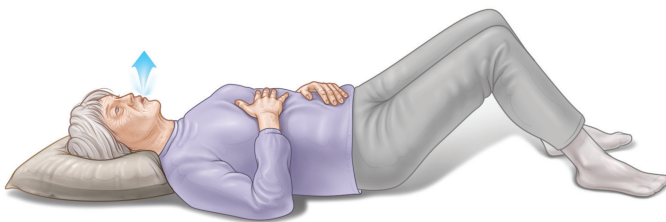
Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth while almost closing your lips. Breathe in for about 4 seconds, and breathe out for 6 to 8 seconds.

You can also try **breathing while bending**. Bending forward at the waist may make it easier for you to breathe. It can reduce shortness of breath while you are exercising or resting.

## Breathing with your diaphragm

**Breathing with your diaphragm** helps your lungs expand so that they take in more air.

- ▶ Lie on your back, or prop yourself up on several pillows.
- ▶ With one hand on your belly and the other on your chest, breathe in. Push your belly out as far as you can. You should feel the hand on your belly move out, while the hand on your chest should not move. When you breathe out, the hand on your belly should move in.



Once you can do this while you are lying down, you can learn to do it while sitting or standing.





## Stay Strong by Eating Well

It's important to eat regular, healthy meals when you have COPD. Food gives you energy, including the energy you need to breathe. You need more energy to breathe than someone who doesn't have COPD. Eating healthy foods also helps strengthen your body's natural defense system, which helps you avoid infections.

### Make eating easier

Maybe you have little appetite or feel too tired to prepare and eat meals. These tips can make eating easier and help you get the nutrition you need.

If you have other health problems that may restrict the foods you can eat, talk with your doctor or a registered dietitian before making any changes in your diet.

- ▶ Choose foods that are easy to prepare.
- ▶ Eat in a relaxed atmosphere.
- ▶ Avoid foods that are hard to chew.
- ▶ Eat with friends and family.
- ▶ If you eat a main meal, try to eat it early. This way, you will have more energy throughout more of the day.
- ▶ Try to include a favorite food in your meals.

## Avoid shortness of breath

You might find it hard to eat because of breathing problems. Try one or two of these ideas to make it easier.

- ▶ Rest before eating if eating makes you short of breath or tired.
- ▶ Eat while sitting up. This helps remove pressure on your lungs.
- ▶ If you use oxygen, use it while eating. Eating and digestion require energy, which causes your body to use more oxygen.

▶ Eat six small meals a day instead of three large ones so your stomach is never extremely full. A full stomach can get in the way of breathing by pushing on the diaphragm.

▶ Eat and chew slowly so you are less likely to become short of breath. Try putting down your spoon or fork between bites to slow your eating speed.

## Add Calories to a Meal or Snack

Add this:	To this:
Egg or egg yolk	Meat loaf, macaroni and cheese, and similar foods. Be sure to cook the food after adding the egg.
Powdered milk	Creamed soups, scrambled eggs, pudding, potatoes, yogurt, and casseroles
Cheese	Sandwiches, crackers, casseroles, soups, toast, and pasta
Vegetable oil, olive oil, mayonnaise, butter, or sour cream	Sandwiches, pasta, potatoes, rice, and gravy
Ground-up nuts	Puddings, gravy, mashed potatoes, casseroles, salads, and yogurt



## Coping and Support

COPD brings big changes to your life. Coping with your feelings and seeking help when you need it can help you live better with COPD. Take some time to learn about COPD and your treatment plan. This can help you and your family cope with your disease.

Shortness of breath may lower your activity level. That can make you feel sad and alone because you can't enjoy activities with your family and friends. These feelings are common.

It might help to know that you should be able to lead a full life, including being sexually active.

But if you have symptoms of depression, like feeling sad and hopeless much of the time, or if you are worried a lot, talk to

your doctor. Depression and anxiety can be treated with counseling and medicine.

### Build a support network

Anxiety can make your symptoms worse and can cause flare-ups and make them last longer. Support from family and friends can lower your anxiety and stress. You might want to think about joining a COPD support group.

Ask your doctor about the types of support that are available where you live, or look for an online support group. Meeting other people with the same problems can help you know you're not alone.

There are many ways to help you lead a full life.



To learn about using exercise to feel better, go to [www.healthwise.net/patiented](http://www.healthwise.net/patiented) and enter **Q591** into the search box.

To learn about healthy thinking, go to [www.healthwise.net/patiented](http://www.healthwise.net/patiented) and enter **J552** into the search box.



# Cal's Story



## “Why me?”

That's what Cal asked himself over and over after he was diagnosed with severe COPD 5 years ago.

“I spent the first 2 years moping around the house, feeling sorry for myself,” he says. “I didn't go anywhere, I didn't do anything. I just sat in front of the TV and tried not to think about anything.”

Then one day Sonny, his 5-year-old granddaughter, walked up to him as he sat in his easy chair. “She looked up at me—she's got these enormous brown eyes—and she said, ‘Poppy, why won't you come outside and play with me?’

“Well, it about broke my heart. I decided that day to get out of that chair and get back into life. The trouble was, I couldn't take 10 steps without getting out of breath.”

But he decided 10 steps was a good start. “I got on our old treadmill and walked for 1 minute that first day.”

It was really hard for Cal. He had to stop twice, and he needed his oxygen while he was doing it. But he did it again the next day, and the next. Then he decided to see if he could add 1 minute of walking each week.

One minute gradually became 5 minutes. Then 5 minutes eventually turned into 15 minutes.

## Small steps lead to big changes

“That was 3 years ago,” says Cal. “Now I walk an hour around my neighborhood every day. That's right, an hour! And I do it without my oxygen.”

Cal thinks it helped a lot that he increased his walking time so gradually. It kept him from getting discouraged. “Now I feel better than I have in years. I'm really amazed.”

And after school every day, Sonny and her little brother come over and play in the yard with their Poppy.

*This story is based on information gathered from many people with COPD.*

# Action Plan

Work with your doctor to fill out the information below.

Name:	Doctor's Phone Number:
Doctor's Name:	Other Emergency Contact Numbers:
When should I call my doctor?	Next doctor visit date:
Call 911 if:	
List of my medicines:	When to take my medicines:
Does my doctor recommend any changes to my medicines?	
What do I need to check or keep track of? ( <i>healthy eating, physical activity, weight</i> )	
Do I need to change my diet or activities?	



When you see this symbol, look for the four-digit code in bold print. Then go to [www.healthwise.net/patiented](http://www.healthwise.net/patiented). Type the code into the search box and get helpful, interactive decision-making tools and much more!



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