

## Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a condition where the airways in the lungs become inflamed and damaged. COPD is caused by various factors including long-term exposure to certain pollutants or tobacco.

### Risk

People with COPD have a higher risk of developing heart disease, lung cancer, and other health conditions. COPD is a progressive condition meaning it gets worse over time.

### Medications

There is no cure for COPD but medicines can help slow down how quickly COPD worsens. COPD treatment generally includes multiple medicines to manage symptoms and improve breathing.

- **Rescue inhalers** provide quick relief from symptoms by relaxing the muscles in the airways and should only be taken as needed.
- **Long-term controller inhalers** help prevent and control COPD symptoms and are usually taken every day.

Using rescue and controller medicines correctly is important for COPD symptom control. Talk with your pharmacist about ways to remember to take your medicines.

Your pharmacist or health care provider should educate you about the following:

- Which medication to use
- How to use your inhaler and/or nebulizer
- How to clean your inhaler and/or nebulizer

Ask your pharmacist if you have questions about which inhalers to use when, how to use your inhaler, or how to clean your inhaler. If you have trouble using your inhaler, ask your pharmacist or health care provider about other options that might be better for you – this may include using a spacer or switching to a different type of inhaler.

### Monitoring

Regular visits with your healthcare provider are an important part of managing your COPD. Your provider will talk to you about your symptoms, how well your treatments are working and whether you have other health problems that may affect your COPD.

It may be helpful to keep track of changes in any of the following:

- Cough
- Saliva (sputum/phlegm) production
- Shortness of breath
- Tiredness
- Limitations in activity
- Sleep disturbances

### Other things you can do

Lifestyle changes can play an important role in COPD management. Some tips include:

- If you smoke, get help to quit
- Engage in regular physical activity if you are able
- Clear your airways (e.g. controlled coughing, drinking plenty of water and using a humidifier)

Getting the series of pneumonia vaccinations and a yearly flu shot is strongly recommended for people with COPD. Ask your pharmacist about these important immunizations.

### Resources

1. Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease (GOLD). Global Strategy for the Diagnosis, Management and Prevention of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease: 2023. <https://goldcopd.org/2024-gold-report/>
2. Mayo Clinic. COPD. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/copd/symptoms-causes/syc-20353679#:~:targetText=The%20combination%20of%20asthma%2C%20a,to%20fumes%20from%20burning%20fuel.>