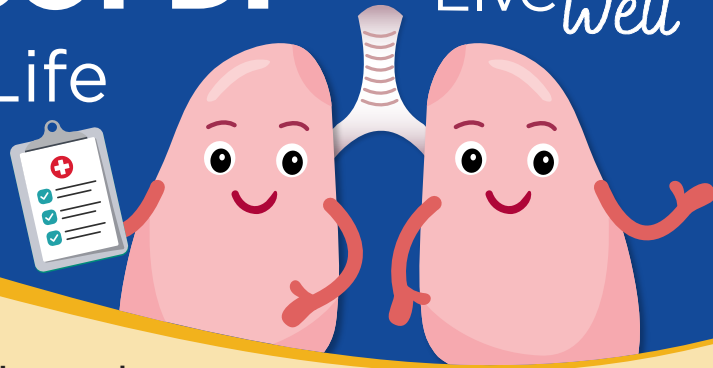


# Take Action on COPD:

## Protect Your Lungs for Life



Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or COPD, is a serious chronic lung condition that makes it difficult to breathe. COPD worsens over time and can prevent you from doing routine activities. Take action to lower your risk for developing COPD or to minimize its impact.



### Reduce Your Risk for COPD

You can greatly lower your risk for COPD by protecting your lungs from cigarette smoke and other harmful irritants.



#### Stay Smoke-Free

The best way to lower your risk for COPD is to **not smoke**. In the U.S., cigarette smoking is the #1 cause of COPD. If you smoke:

- Ask your healthcare provider about programs and products to help you quit.
- Call the CDC Quitline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW.
- Learn about other resources to help you quit, like [smokefree.gov](http://smokefree.gov).
- You don't have to do it alone! Consider joining a support group.



#### Avoid Other Lung Irritants

Smoking isn't the only cause of COPD. Be aware of **what you're breathing in**.

- Avoid exposure to:
  - Secondhand smoke
  - Air pollution
  - Chemical fumes
  - Dust from the environment or workplace
  - Smoke from home cooking
  - Heating fuels without ventilation
- If you're exposed to any of these things at work, talk to your employer about how to limit exposure.



LEARN MORE  
BREATHE BETTER

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

## Ask Your Healthcare Provider If You Could Have COPD

If you have symptoms of COPD, don't wait for them to become serious. The sooner you're diagnosed, the sooner you can make changes and begin treatment, which can slow the progression of the disease.



### Recognize the Symptoms

Most people are **40 or older** when symptoms start.

- Look out for these signs of COPD:
  - › Shortness of breath
  - › Coughing
  - › Wheezing
  - › Chest tightness
  - › Fatigue
- Make a list of any symptoms you have and any activities that you can no longer do because of your symptoms. Bring this information to your next visit with your healthcare provider.



### Talk to Your Healthcare Provider

COPD symptoms **aren't just a sign of getting older** and aren't the same as allergies.

- Discuss your symptoms with your healthcare provider, along with:
  - › Your smoking habits
  - › Any family history of COPD
  - › Any long-term exposure to lung irritants
- Talk about getting a spirometry test. This quick and simple breathing test measures how well your lungs work and can help diagnose COPD.
- If you smoke, ask for resources to get support to quit.



## Learn About Alpha-1 Antitrypsin (AAT) Deficiency

**AAT deficiency**, sometimes called **Alpha-1**, is a disease that runs in families. Alpha-1 increases your risk for COPD. People with this disease may have COPD symptoms as early as age 20. If you have symptoms or a family history of COPD, talk to your healthcare provider about being tested for AAT deficiency and COPD.

## Manage Your COPD

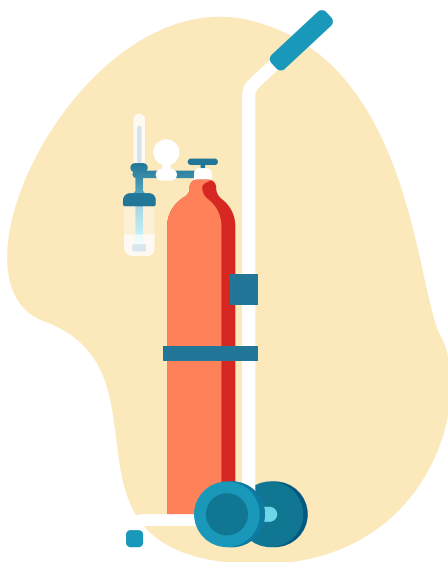
If you've been diagnosed with this disease, lifestyle changes and treatments can help you feel better and be more active.



### Stick to Your Treatment Plan

Treatment can include **medications** like bronchodilators and steroids, **oxygen therapy**, and, in some cases, surgery.

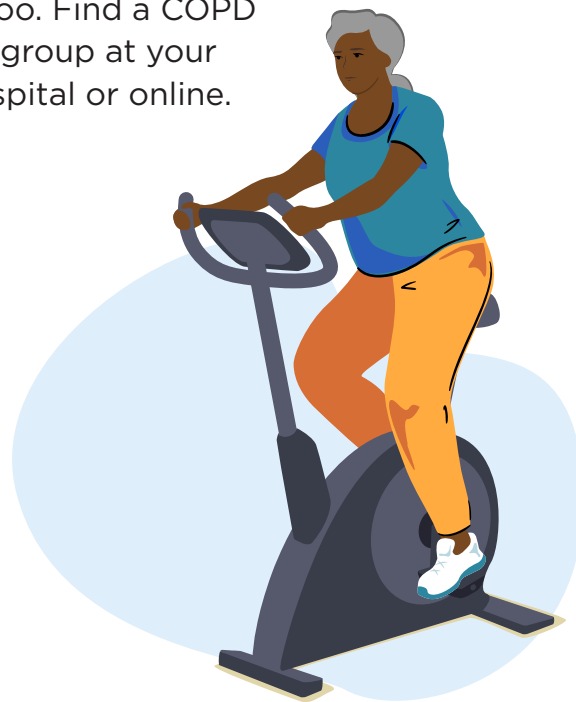
- Be sure to take medicines as prescribed.
- Understand how to use and maintain your inhaler and other devices.
- Learn how to use, maintain, and safely store supplemental oxygen if your doctor prescribes it to help you breathe.
- See your healthcare provider regularly and be sure to take a list of all of your medications to each visit.
- Ask your healthcare provider about pulmonary rehabilitation, a personalized treatment program that includes exercise training, COPD management, and more.



### Make Healthy Choices

**Lifestyle changes** can slow the progression of the disease.

- If you smoke, ask for help quitting. It's never too late! Quitting is an important part of a COPD treatment plan.
- Drink plenty of fluids, include high-fiber foods in your diet, and avoid foods high in sodium.
- Stay physically active. Physical activity can strengthen the muscles that help you breathe. Your doctor can recommend things you can do safely.
- Take care of your mental health, too. Find a COPD support group at your local hospital or online.



## Try to Avoid Triggering Flare-Ups

You may notice that **certain triggers can cause a flare-up**, or a sudden worsening of COPD symptoms. Learning what these triggers are can help you avoid flare-ups.

- Avoid lung irritants like fumes, dust, and smoke.
- Go to [airnow.gov](https://airnow.gov) to check the air quality where you live, and stay inside with the windows closed when the air quality is at unhealthy levels.
- Avoid cold temperatures.
- Try to avoid being around sick people, and consider wearing a mask in public indoor places.



## Protect Yourself: Stay Up to Date on Vaccines

People with COPD are at an **increased risk for complications** from certain illnesses.

- Get a flu shot every year.
- Get vaccinated against pneumococcal disease.
- Talk to your doctor about getting vaccinated for COVID-19.



## Resource Roundup

Visit [copd.nhlbi.nih.gov](https://copd.nhlbi.nih.gov) to learn more about many of the tips provided here.

- [COPD: Are You at Risk?](#)
- [Breathing Better With a COPD Diagnosis](#)
- [COPD and Smoking: My Plan to Quit](#)
- [COPD and Vaccines: What You Should Know](#)
- [A Quick Guide on COPD](#)
- [The COPD Caregiver's Toolkit](#)
- [Resources to Quit Smoking](#)