



Understanding chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, more commonly known as COPD, refers to a group of lung diseases that restrict airflow and cause breathing related problem in patients. Around 16 million Americans are currently diagnosed with COPD and millions more are currently experiencing symptoms going undiagnosed.³

Walgreens

The symptoms of COPD can vary greatly from patient to patient. Below are some of the most common

symptoms of COPD:¹

- Frequent coughing and/or wheezing
- Trouble taking a deep breath or inability to breathe easily
- Excess phlegm or mucus buildup
- Shortness of breath
- One of the main causes of COPD is tobacco smoke, which means if you currently smoke or used to smoke you are at an elevated risk of complications from COPD

How to best manage COPD

Sticking to a treatment plan provided from your doctor as well as avoiding common triggers for exacerbations can help to improve your overall COPD management and quality of life.

Common treatments

- Quitting smoking if you are still currently smoking
- Medications such as inhalers. Inhalers help to open up your airways, allowing for easier breathing:
 - **Maintenance inhalers** are used on a regular basis and work to prevent symptoms and flare ups from occurring
 - **Rescue inhalers** are intended to be used for quick or “rescue” relief if you are experiencing a flare up
- Pulmonary Rehabilitation to help understand how to breathe better as well as ways to conserve energy, allowing you to be active without experiencing shortness of breath
- Portable oxygen tank to provide supplemental oxygen if needed

Potential triggers to avoid exacerbations

- Extreme weather (switching from cold to hot)
- Air pollutants
- Tobacco smoke
- Respiratory infections



References

1. <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/all-publications-and-resources/copd-national-action-plan>
2. <https://www.lung.org/lung-health-diseases/lung-disease-lookup/copd>
3. <https://www.cdc.gov/copd/features/copd-symptoms-diagnosis-treatment.html>

