

Patient Information about COPD

<http://www.pulmonologychannel.com/patient-information-copd/index.shtml>

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a lung disease that interferes with breathing, especially exhaling. Emphysema and chronic bronchitis are pulmonary diseases involved in COPD. In most cases, obstructive pulmonary disease is caused by smoking. People who have asthma or a hereditary form of emphysema are at higher risk for developing COPD.

Common symptoms of COPD include shortness of breath, wheezing, weight loss, swelling in the feet, ankles or lower legs, and chronic cough. COPD diagnosis involves pulmonary function tests and treatment for the condition includes medication, surgery, and behavioral therapy. COPD can lead to serious complications, such as pneumonia, pulmonary hypertension, right-sided heart failure, acute exacerbations (sudden worsening of symptoms), and end-stage lung disease.

Here are some questions to ask your doctor (e.g., pulmonologist) about chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. **Print this page**, check off the questions you would like answered, and bring it to your doctor's appointment. The more you know about COPD, the easier it will be to work with your health care team to develop an effective treatment plan.

Questions to Ask Your Doctor about COPD

- Why do you suspect that I have COPD?
- Does my condition involve emphysema, chronic bronchitis, or a combination of these conditions?
- What is causing my COPD?
- I quit smoking years ago. Why am I having lung problems now?
- I have been coughing a lot more lately. What could be causing this?
- I have noticed blood coming up when I cough. Should I be checked for lung cancer?
- What pulmonary function tests should I have?
- What do these tests involve?
- When can I expect the results?
- Will someone call me with the results? If not, who should I contact?

Name:

Telephone number:

Date to call:

- I am concerned about the diffusion capacity test. Is it really safe for me to inhale carbon monoxide? How will I feel after this test?
- Will a chest x-ray or CT scan be performed? Why or why not?
- What is an arterial blood test like? How is it different to have blood drawn from an artery rather than a vein? Is this test painful?
- How severe is my COPD?
- If I am unable to stop smoking, what might happen?
- If I quit smoking, how might this affect my condition? Might my condition improve?
- Can you recommend any smoking cessation classes, support groups, or other ways to help me quit?
- What can I do about nicotine withdrawal symptoms?
- Do you think nicotine replacement therapy would work well for me? Why or why not?
- Will medication be prescribed for my COPD? If so, what kind of medicine? How should I take it?
- What are the potential benefits and side effects of this medication?
- What should I do if my condition worsens or I experience severe side effects?
Telephone number to call:
- Will I need to use an inhaler or nebulizer?
- Will I need oxygen therapy? If so, what precautions must I take when using oxygen?
- Can you recommend a pulmonary rehabilitation program so that I can exercise properly?
- What does participation in this type of program involve?
- What types of dietary changes should I make? Should I see a nutritionist?
- Am I a candidate for lung volume reduction surgery or lung transplant? Why or why not?
- Do you recommend that I get yearly flu and pneumonia vaccines?

- What other steps can I take to avoid getting the flu or pneumonia?
- Might I need nocturnal noninvasive ventilation? If so, what does this involve?
- How do I set this treatment up at home?
- Can you explain acute COPD exacerbations?
- What are the signs and symptoms of respiratory failure?
- What should I do if I experience these symptoms?
- If I need invasive or noninvasive ventilation, how can I be weaned from this treatment off of it?
- How often is chronic ventilation used to treat COPD?
- What should my family and caregivers know about COPD and ventilation?
- If I do not want to be placed on a ventilator or want to stop the ventilation process, what should I do?
- How might COPD affect my heart and other organs?
- What does end-stage lung disease involve?
- What happens when a lung collapses? What are the symptoms of this condition?
- Do you recommend that I participate in a clinical trial for COPD? Why or why not?
- Where can I learn more about COPD? Can you recommend any books or websites?
- Can you recommend a local or online support group for patients with COPD and their families?

Notes/Additional Information