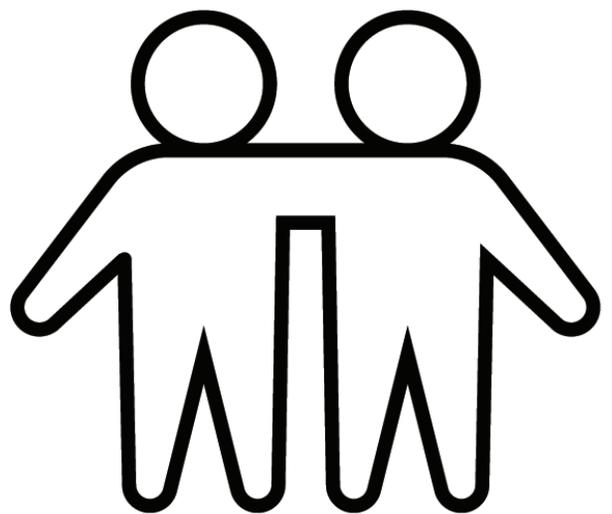


Living with COPD: 5 steps to better lung health

Breathe better
Feel good
Do more



Name:

Date:

COPD or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease mainly affects your lungs and how well you can breathe, but it can also affect your muscles, heart, bones and overall mood. COPD can be worrying and frustrating, but you can do something about it.

5 steps to better lung health

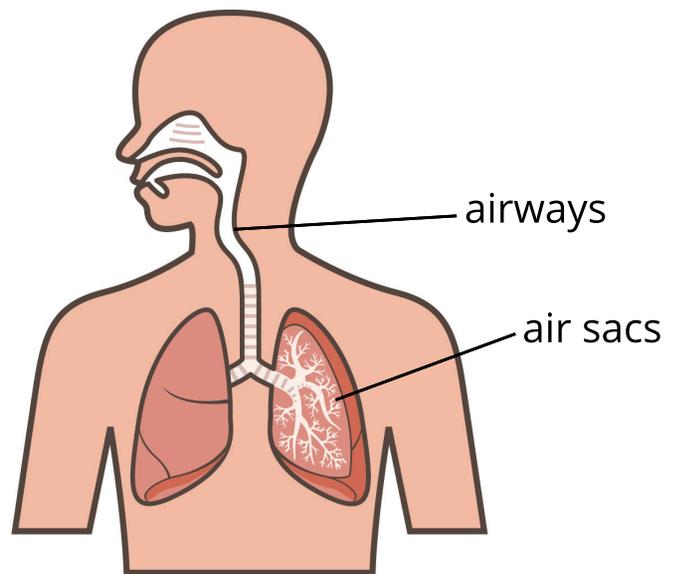
1. Understand your lungs
2. Protect your lungs from more damage
3. Keep active
4. Take the medicine prescribed to you
5. Achieve a healthy weight and eat healthy foods

If you follow these steps you should be able to breathe better, you should feel good and you should be able to do more.

Step 1: Understand your lungs

Our lungs breathe in the air that we need and breathe out the air we do not need.

Air comes in and out through our nose and mouth, and travels via tubes (airways) to our lungs.



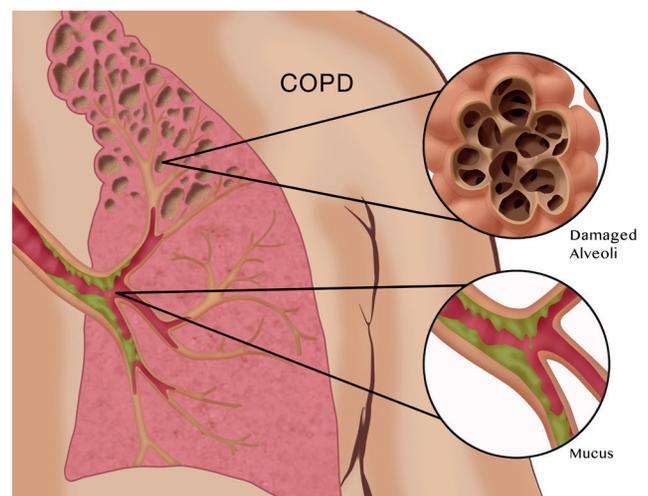
The air that we need comes in and the air we do not need goes out of our blood in the air sacs (alveoli) in the lungs.

What is COPD?

Two things have happened if you have COPD:

1. Damaged airways, which become narrow and full of mucus, making it harder to breathe air in and out.

2. Damaged air sacs, which make it difficult to get oxygen from the air into the body. The walls of the air sacs become less stretchy and so it is also more difficult to empty air out of the lungs.



What are the symptoms of COPD?

The main symptoms of COPD are finding it hard to breathe and coughing.

You may also feel tired and weak.

Sometimes you may have a COPD attack (or exacerbation), where these symptoms get much worse.

What causes COPD?

Many things damage the lungs and cause COPD, including:

- Being born prematurely (too early) and your lungs not growing properly
- Having a chest infection, pneumonia or TB
- Smoking tobacco or breathing in other people's tobacco smoke
- Breathing smoke from cooking fires or fires used for heating
- Breathing in dusts and smoke at work

If your lungs are damaged they cannot get better again BUT you can make sure they don't get any more damaged and that they work as well as they can. This will help you to feel as well as possible.

Step 2: Protect your lungs from damage

Stop smoking tobacco

- Get help to stop smoking from your healthcare worker or pharmacist – it is much easier to quit with help
- Stay away from other people's smoke – it damages your lungs



Avoid smoke at home

- If you can, use clean fuels like gas, or use “clean” cookstoves that produce less smoke
- Keep children away from fires and the smoke
- Spend as little time as you can near cooking smoke, kerosene lamps, etc.
- Remove smoke by ventilating your home, e.g. a chimney, open door, smoke hole

Protect your lungs at work

- Avoid dusts and smoke in the workplace
- Make sure your workplace is well-ventilated
- Wear protection

Get vaccines as recommended

Step 3: Keep active

- When you exercise or do your daily activities you may find it hard to breathe at first
- This is not dangerous and it will go away quickly when you stop
- It can be uncomfortable and scary, but the worst thing you can do is avoid exercise – if you do, you will become unfit and will find it even harder to breathe during simple tasks
- Walking is a good way to exercise
- Being active at work or at home is important too
- Exercise until you are a little bit out of breath, warm, and you can feel your heart beating
- Gradually do more activity each day so that you are doing a total of 30 minutes of exercise each day on 5 days each week
- Your health worker may be able to advise you on specific exercises to do



Important – avoid the vicious circle:

- Being breathless makes you want to rest
- The more you rest, the weaker you become
- Your muscles stop working well, become small and weak
- You cannot walk so far or work so hard
- You can get fed up
- Unless you fight back and keep active, you will get weaker and more breathless over time

Step 4: Take the medicine prescribed to you

Listen to the advice from your doctor or health worker:

- You will be given some “reliever” medication to take when you feel you need it
- This will help with breathing as it will keep your airways open
- You may also be given medicines to take regularly every day



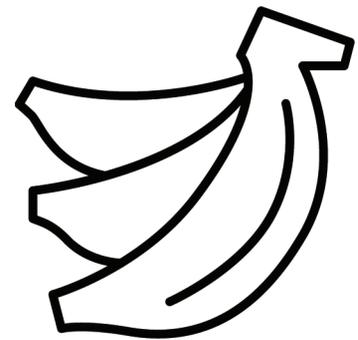
If your symptoms get much worse:

- See your doctor/ health worker as soon as possible
- You may be prescribed steroid pills and antibiotics that you should take as directed by your doctor/ health worker

Step 5: Achieve a healthy weight and eat healthy foods

Eat a balanced diet of healthy foods:

- Meat, fish, beans/ground nuts or milk every day to help your body heal itself and is good for healthy strong muscles (including those that help with breathing)
- Fresh fruit and green vegetables every day to protect the lungs from infections
- Sugar, starchy and fatty foods to give you energy (you will need more energy foods if you are too thin and less if you are overweight)



- If you are overweight your lungs and heart have to work harder, and so it can make your breathing even more difficult
- If you are too thin, you are more at risk from infections
- You may find it easier to have smaller meals more often
- Drink lots of water, especially when it is hot

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