

Living With COPD: Your Daily Guide

Medical-Surgical • Respiratory / Pulmonology

COPD is a long-term lung disease that makes it hard to get air out of your lungs. These steps help you breathe easier and stay out of the hospital.

Stop smoking

- **Stopping smoking is the most important thing you can do for your lungs.**
- Ask about nicotine patches, gum, or pills that help you quit.
- Keep your home and car smoke-free.

Breathe with less effort

- **Pursed-lip breathing:** breathe in through your nose for 2 counts. Pucker your lips as if to whistle. Breathe out slowly for 4 counts.
- **Belly breathing:** put one hand on your chest and one on your belly. Your belly moves out as you breathe in. Your chest stays still.
- Use it when you walk, climb stairs, or feel short of breath.

Save your energy

- Sit to dress, shave, and cook. Rest between tasks.
- Breathe out during the hard part of a task, like lifting.

Use your inhalers

- Use your daily inhaler every day, even when you feel well.
- Keep your rescue inhaler with you.

- After a steroid inhaler, rinse your mouth with water and spit.

Eat well and stay protected

- Eat small meals often. Choose foods high in calories and protein.
- Get a flu shot every year. Ask about pneumonia, COVID-19, and RSV shots.
- Ask about pulmonary rehab, a program of exercise and breathing training.

Call your provider today if you have

- More shortness of breath than usual
- More mucus, or mucus that changes color
- A need for your rescue inhaler more often than usual
- Fever, or more swelling in your feet or ankles

Call 911 or your local emergency number if you have

- Severe shortness of breath, even at rest, or trouble speaking
- Breathing that does not get better with your rescue inhaler
- New confusion or unusual sleepiness
- Blue or gray lips or fingertips, or chest pain

This handout supports, not replaces, advice from your own nurse or doctor.

Online: nclexpace.com/patient-education/copd-living-with/patient

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