

MANAGING COPD THROUGH EXERCISE

In partnership with POTENTRx

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What is COPD?

COPD, or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, is an umbrella term for progressive lung diseases. These include refractory asthma (non-reversible), emphysema, chronic bronchitis, and some forms of bronchiectasis (abnormally stretched or enlarged airways) that are characterized by breathlessness.

Know Your Facts!

Q: What are common symptoms of COPD?

A: Common symptoms of COPD include increasing breathlessness, frequent coughing (with and without sputum or mucus), wheezing, and tightness in the chest.

Q: How common is COPD?

A: COPD affects an estimated 24 million people in the United States, however, over half are unaware of their illness.

Q: What causes COPD?

A: Inhalation of pollutants is the most common cause of COPD (about 90% of people with COPD have smoked). These pollutants include smoke, certain chemicals, dust, and fumes from around the home or work. There is also a genetic factor to COPD.

Q: I've never smoked but I experience some symptoms of COPD; should I be worried?

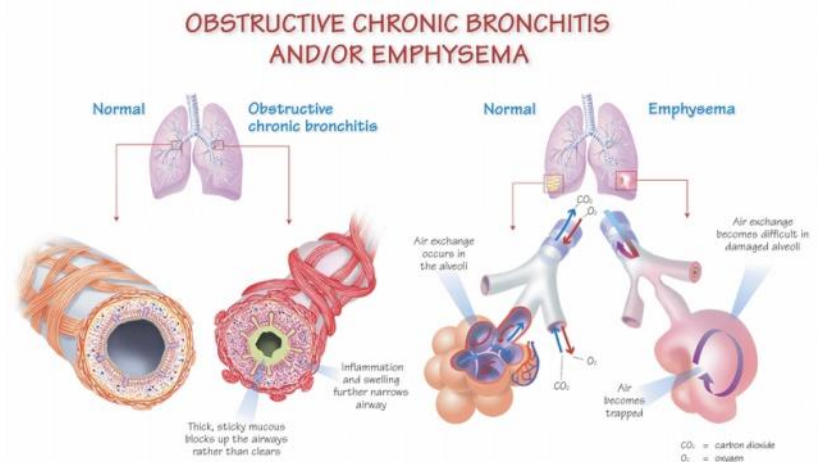
A: Some cases of COPD are not caused by smoking or exposure to pollutants for extended periods of time. Alpha-1 Antitrypsin Deficiency (AATD) is the most commonly known genetic risk factor for emphysema, however, there are other genetic factors that are still unknown.

Q: Is there anything I can do to control my COPD aside from taking medication?

A: Yes! There are many modifiable risk factors that contribute to COPD. Please refer to the reverse side for lifestyle changes that can help to relieve COPD.

Chronic lower respiratory diseases are the third leading cause of death in the United States.

CDC, 2013





What Can Lifestyle Changes Do For COPD?

There are many effective lifestyle changes to manage COPD — exercise, breathing techniques, oxygen therapy, and removing pollutants from your work or home environments are some changes that may help. Pursed lip breathing is a technique to control and reduce the work of breathing, increase respiratory endurance, and improve the exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide. Diaphragmatic (abdominal/ belly) breathing can make breathing easier because the diaphragm is the main muscle of breathing. It is not as easy to perform as pursed lip breathing, so it is recommended that you get training by an experienced, healthcare professional. It may be hard to reduce exposure to pollutants in the work place, but here are some steps to increase the quality of the air in your home: ventilate by opening windows and running exhaust fans, do not allow smoking, remove clutter (clutter collects dust), wash bed linens weekly, lower humidity, keep the floor and carpets clean, install an air filtration system, have your air conditioner inspected regularly for mold and mildew, and reduce exposure to household chemicals such as paints, varnishes, and cleaning products.

(Pursed lip breathing; inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth)



Factors of COPD

There is no one, definite cause of COPD, but the following are known to increase risk for COPD:

Modifiable Risk Factors

Smoking, and exposure to pollutants.

Non-Modifiable Risk Factors

Genetics, and exposure to pollutants (some pollutants may be unavoidable).

What Can Exercise Do For COPD?

It is important to receive a pre-exercise evaluation with a healthcare professional to determine what level of activity is right for you. Exercise cannot remedy COPD, but it can improve the way you feel, breathe, and function. Exercise reverses the deconditioning often experienced by people with COPD, as restricted breathing hinders any type of physical activity. Aerobic exercise performed 3-5 times a week for a total of 150 minutes is recommended (water based exercises have been shown to be more effective). Exercise intensity is dependent on your physician's pre-exercise evaluation, or at least 60% of your maximum heart rate (moderate intensity). Stretching and strengthening of the respiratory muscles is also recommended to enhance circulation and improve COPD symptoms. Make sure to practice good breathing techniques before, during, and after exercise such as pursed lip breathing, and diaphragmatic breathing.