

# YOUR GUIDE TO CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE (COPD)



November marks the beginning of COPD Awareness Month. Learn about COPD and how you can lower your risk of catching the disease.

## WHAT IS COPD?

COPD refers to a group of lung conditions that make it difficult to empty air from the lungs because the airways have become narrower.

Usually, narrowed airways are caused by the following:

- › Damaged lung tissue
- › Mucus blockages
- › Inflammation or swelling of the airway lining

COPD is a long-term condition and typically develops as a result of long-term damage to your lungs. Damage is **caused** by breathing in a harmful substance, usually cigarette smoke, smoke from other sources, or air pollution.

Generally, COPD affects people over the age of 35. However, you're more likely to develop the disease if you are - or have been - a smoker, or if you had chest problems during childhood.

## SYMPTOMS OF COPD

Here are some **signs** of COPD you need to look out for:



Shortness of breath after completing everyday tasks  
(e.g. cleaning the house)



A long-term cough



Wheezing in cold weather



Producing more phlegm than usual



Frequent chest infections

There are other conditions that cause similar symptoms to the above, such as asthma or anaemia, but a doctor will be able to conduct a simple breathing test to accurately diagnose COPD.



## HOW TO PREVENT COPD

The most common cause of COPD is smoking and accounts for **8 out of 10** COPD-related deaths. Therefore, if you are a smoker, you should consider taking steps towards quitting.

However, there are several other lung irritants that you need to be aware of, including air pollution, dust, chemical fumes and secondhand smoke.

Here are some helpful tips on how to reduce your exposure:

- › If you have a fireplace, make sure it's in a well-ventilated room
- › Stay inside if there's noticeable air pollution outside such as smog
- › Encourage others not to smoke inside your home
- › Always wear the correct protective equipment if you will be exposed to chemical fumes

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