

Smoking and COPD

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is the fourth most common cause of death in the United States.^{1,2} Smoking is the main (95%) cause of COPD. Nine out of 10 deaths from COPD are related to smoking.¹ And people who live with the disease may have major, long-term disabilities.¹

What is COPD?

COPD is a lung disease. It makes it hard for you to exhale “used” air from your lungs.³ This makes it hard for you to breathe.¹ COPD includes 3 diseases³:

- **Asthmatic and chronic (long-term) bronchitis:** inflamed and swollen airways and a buildup of mucus in your lungs that leads to lung infections³
- **Emphysema:** damaged and destroyed air sacs in your lungs that make it hard for your blood to get nutrients and to get rid of waste³

What are the symptoms of COPD?

Different people have different symptoms with COPD. Symptoms may change and get worse over time. They include³:

- A cough that does not go away
- Shortness of breath
- Producing a lot of mucus
- Wheezing

See your doctor if you have any of these symptoms. They will not go away on their own.⁴ Get a lung test (called spirometry) to find out if you have COPD. That way, you can get treatment to help it from getting worse.¹

What can you do about COPD?

The most important step you can take to prevent COPD is to stop smoking. If you already have it, stopping smoking is the most important step to keep it from getting worse.¹

Having COPD can seriously affect your quality of life. It can make it hard to do your usual activities.¹ And it can even lead to death.¹ So do what you can to avoid this destructive disease. Consider contacting your doctor to learn more about quitting smoking.

Join the Beat the Pack program, and you'll breathe a lot easier.

BEAT THE PACK

References:

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2. National Jewish Medical and Research Center. About chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). <http://www.nationaljewish.org/disease-info/diseases/copd/about/index.aspx>. Accessed May 5, 2008.
3. National Lung Health Education Program. COPD and asthma. http://www.nlhep.org/lung_copd.html. Accessed May 5, 2008.
4. National Jewish Medical and Research Center. Recognizing signs and symptoms of COPD. <http://www.nationaljewish.org/disease-info/diseases/copd/about/symptoms.aspx>. Accessed May 5, 2008.