

COPD exacerbations

COPD exacerbations (flares of disease), are the most common complication of COPD. A COPD exacerbation is when your COPD suddenly gets worse. Most people with COPD have a fairly regular baseline, a degree of shortness of breath, fatigue, and coughing that is normal for them. During a COPD exacerbation, someone who has COPD may be much more short of breath, coughing much more than usual, or producing more sputum (mucus) than usual.

COPD exacerbations can land you in the hospital, so it's important to take them seriously.



Lifestyle changes will help you live better with COPD.

- Avoiding exposure to triggers (things that make your breathing worse),
- planning your activity
- learning and using special breathing techniques to improve oxygen flow to your lungs can help you feel better
- People with COPD benefit from **more**, rather than less exercise.

*For more information about this program in the Heartland Health Region
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Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease

COPD

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COPD is short for **Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease** and includes chronic bronchitis and emphysema.

The term COPD is used because both diseases cause chronic cough and shortness of breath, making it harder for people to breathe. If you are over 40 and smoke or used to smoke, you may have COPD. Some non-smokers can also get COPD

Signs & Symptoms of COPD

- cough regularly
- cough up phlegm regularly
- simple chores make you short of breath
- wheeze when you exert yourself (exercise, go up stairs)
- get many colds, and colds usually last longer than your friends' colds



Diagnosis

Spirometry is a common and effective diagnostic test that can easily be done in your doctor's office or at a nearby hospital or clinic. You will be asked to blow, as long and hard as you can, into a small tube attached to a machine. The machine measures how long it takes to blow out all the air from your lungs. The more blocked your airways, the longer it takes to blow the air out. Spirometry is the most reliable way to test your lungs for COPD. Your doctor may call spirometry by another name including: pulmonary function test (PFT) or lung function test

There is no cure for COPD, but treatment can help you control your symptoms, so you can enjoy life. Medications are used to open up the airways and improve the flow of air and oxygen to the body. COPD medications are generally divided into two main categories: maintenance medications and rescue medications.



COPD can't be cured, but it can be treated & managed

- **Proper COPD treatment includes these steps:**
- **Quit smoking to slow down your COPD.**
- **Take COPD medications to prevent and lessen symptoms.**
- **Make changes to your lifestyle to stay healthy.**
- **Engage in physical activity and exercise. If you need support, you may join a pulmonary rehabilitation program.**
- **Prevent and control your COPD flare-ups or worsening of symptoms.**
- **For certain people with COPD, doctors may also recommend oxygen therapy.**