

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease



Patient and Family Education

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Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease

What is Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease?

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a lung disease caused by chronic obstruction of the lung.

Signs and Symptoms

- Shortness of breath while exercising
- Continuous coughing and increasing sputum
- Feeling wheezy and fatigue

Causes

- Smoking or passive smoking
- Inhaling indoor polluted air
- Inhaling outdoor polluted air
- Repeated infections in the lower pulmonary system in childhood
- Being 40 years old or above
- Heredity

Complications

- Respiratory infection: patients with COPD are more likely to get colds, flu and lungs infections. In addition, any lung infections could cause difficulties in breathing and damages the lung tissue.
- Pulmonary hypertension: COPD might cause pulmonary hypertension in the arteries that carry blood to the lungs.
- Heart problems: reasons remain unknown, but patients with COPD are more likely to experience heart problems, especially heart attacks.
- Depression: patients might feel depressed due to difficulties in breathing and the inability to perform daily activities.

Management

There is no ultimate cure for COPD, however changes in lifestyle and in addition to some medications can help to ease the symptoms or avoid them. Patients with COPD should do the following:

- Stop smoking
- Use oxygen as directed by your doctor
- Use antibiotics to treat pulmonary infections, under doctor's supervision
- Use medication like bronchodilators, under doctor's supervision
- Rehabilitation exercises

Prevention

- Don't smoke and avoid breathing in second-hand smoke
- Avoid polluted air, both indoors and outdoors
- Avoid weather fluctuations and dust
- Consume a healthy diet, including fruit, vegetables, meat, poultry and fish
- Have a regular checkup for the lungs, such as a simple breathing test that measures lung functions
- Take the flu shot to avoid infections
- Take necessary safety measures at work