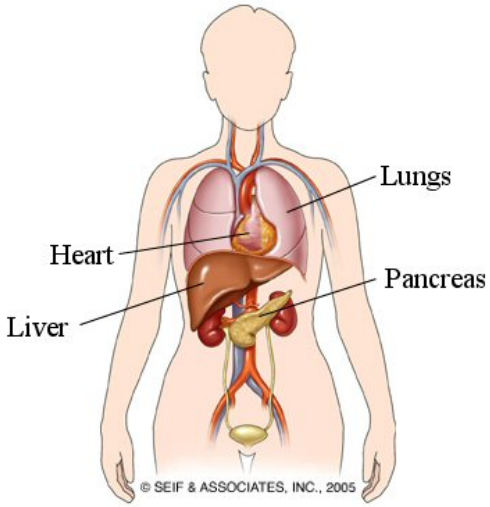
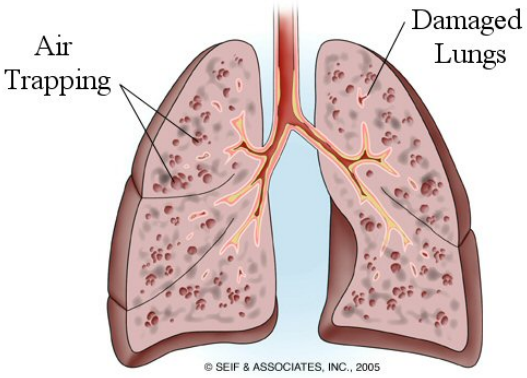
Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease
(COPD)

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a lasting (*permanent*) lung disease. The lungs become damaged, making it hard to get air in and out of your lungs. The damage to your lungs cannot be changed. COPD is caused by long-term smoking or breathing in toxins.
Symptoms can include shortness of breath, coughing, and wheezing.
Your doctor will treat your breathing to help you feel better.



HOME CARE

- If you smoke, **stop smoking.** Smoking makes it hard for your body to get oxygen and causes more damage to your lungs. Avoid secondhand smoke.
- Drink enough water and fluids to keep your urine clear or pale yellow. This helps to loosen any thick mucus (*phlegm*) you may have.
- Use a humidifier or vaporizer. This may help loosen the thick mucus.
- Use home oxygen as told by your doctor.
- Take your medicine as told by your doctor.
- Talk to your doctor about using cough syrup or other over-the-counter medicines.
- Talk to your doctor about vaccines that can help prevent other lung problems. There are vaccines for pneumonia and the flu (*influenza*). It is important that you avoid getting illnesses that affect your lungs. These could cause serious problems.



GET HELP IF:

- You cough up thick mucus that is red, yellow, or green AND this is a change for you.
- You have a temperature by mouth above 102° F (38.9° C).
- Your breathing is not as good as you think it should be.
- Your breathing becomes worse when you walk or exercise.
- You are running out of the medicine you take for your breathing.

GET HELP RIGHT AWAY IF:

- Your heart is beating fast or is skipping beats.
- You become confused, very weak, or pass out (*faint*).
- It is very hard to breathe or to catch your breath.
- You get chest pain or pressure.
- You have a temperature by mouth above 102° F (38.9° C), not controlled by medicine.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

Document Released: 06/05/2009 Document Re-Released: 03/14/2011
ExitCare® Patient Information ©2011 ExitCare, LLC.