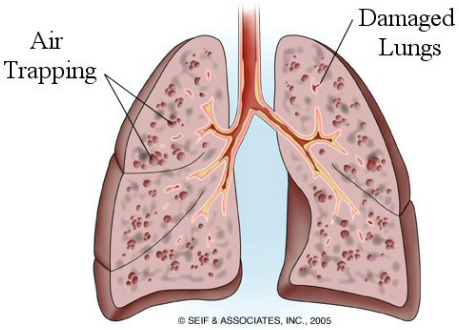
Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a condition in which airflow from the lungs is restricted. The lungs can never return to normal, but there are measures you can take which will improve them and make you feel better.



CAUSES

- Smoking.
- Breathing in irritants (pollution, cigarette smoke, strong odors, aerosol sprays, paint fumes).
- History of lung infections.

TREATMENT

- Treatment focuses on making you comfortable (*supportive care*).

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- If you smoke, **stop smoking.** The carbon monoxide buildup in the blood robs you of your already short oxygen supply.
- Take medicines (*antibiotics*) that kill germs as directed.
- Avoid antihistamines and cough syrups. They dry up your system and slow down the elimination of secretions. This decreases respiratory capacity and may lead to infections.
- Drink enough water and fluids to keep your urine clear or pale yellow. This loosens secretions.
- Use humidifiers at home and at your bedside if they do not make breathing difficult.
- Receive all protective vaccines your caregiver suggests, especially pneumococcal and influenza.
- Use home oxygen as suggested.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop pus-like mucus (*sputum*).
- You have an oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C).
- Breathing is more labored or exercise becomes difficult to do.
- You are running out of the medicine you take for your breathing.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have a rapid heart rate.
- You have agitation, confusion, tremors, or are in a stupor (family members may need to observe this).
- It becomes difficult to breathe.
- You develop chest pain.
- You have an oral temperature 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.

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