



Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease: Resource Guide for Patients

What is Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease?

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) includes chronic bronchitis and emphysema. Smoking is the most important cause of these diseases, although non-smokers can also get COPD.

- In **CHRONIC BRONCHITIS**, inflammation in the bronchial tubes (leading to the lungs) may cause narrowing, which makes breathing difficult. A chronic cough that brings up sputum (mucus) is present.
- In **EMPHYSEMA**, lung tissue and the small air sacs (alveoli) at the end of the airways become damaged and air becomes trapped in the lungs leading to shortness of breath.

➔ **Lung Association:** www.lung.ca/copd

➔ **HealthLinkBC.ca:** [Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease](#)

☎ **8-1-1** (or 7-1-1 for hearing impaired) Speak to a nurse 24/7, or a pharmacist from 5PM-9AM daily.

RECOGNIZE FLARE-UPS

A FLARE-UP is a worsening of the condition that includes these signs:

- Rapid increase in cough
- Increased sputum (mucus) production (especially if yellow or green)
- Increased shortness of breath

Take Steps to Manage Your COPD

While there is no cure, there are many things you can do to manage your COPD.

➔ **HealthLink BC.ca:** [Learning to Breathe Easier](#) | [Avoiding Your Triggers](#) | **Lung.ca:** [BreathWorks Plan](#)

▶ DEVELOP A COPD FLARE-UP ACTION PLAN

Flare-ups can be serious and life-threatening. Prompt and effective treatment can help most people recover to the level of breathing before the flare-ups. **Develop a [COPD FLARE-UP ACTION PLAN](#) with your care provider so you know how to respond to flare-ups.**

➔ **BCGuidelines.ca:** [COPD Flare-Up Action Plan](#)

▶ QUIT SMOKING

Although there is no cure for COPD, **the best way to slow the progression of the disease is to quit smoking.** If you smoke, quitting will reduce the severity of COPD and help you improve your quality of life.

➔ [QuitNow.ca](#) provides one-on-one support and valuable resources in multiple languages to help you plan your strategy and connect with a Quit Coach.

☎ **1-877-455-2233** (toll-free) ✉ quitnow@bc.lung.ca

➔ [BC Smoking Cessation Program](#) helps cover the cost of nicotine replacement therapy products (nicotine gum, lozenges, patches, inhaler) and specific smoking cessation prescription drugs (Zyban® or Champix®). **For prescription medications to help you quit smoking, speak to your doctor.**

AVOID TRIGGERS

TRIGGERS are things that can irritate your lungs and make your COPD symptoms worse. AVOID THESE COMMON TRIGGERS:

- Air pollution, smog
- Second-hand smoke
- Strong fumes
- Perfume, scented products
- Cold air; hot and humid air

▶ STAY ACTIVE

Other than quitting smoking, physical activity is the most important tool for managing COPD since it helps strengthen your breathing muscles so you can breathe easier and feel better. Balance exercise and rest periods. Set realistic goals and make sure your exercise plan is tailored to your fitness level and breathing ability. The key is to start slowly and gradually increase your activity as you get fitter and stronger.

- ➔ **Physical Activity Services at HealthLink BC** – www.healthlinkbc.ca/physical-activity
Call HealthLinkBC and ask to speak to a qualified exercise professional (Monday to Friday, 9AM-5PM).
☎ **8-1-1** (or 7-1-1 for the hearing impaired)
HealthLinkBC.ca: [COPD: Using Exercise to Feel Better](#)
- ➔ **Lung.ca:** [Exercise and COPD](#) | [Managing your Energy with COPD](#)

▶ MAINTAIN A HEALTHY DIET

If you have COPD, you may have a reduced appetite or feel too tired to prepare or eat meals. **However, maintaining a healthy diet is important to keep up your energy and your body's natural defence system.**

- ➔ **Dietitian Services at HealthLinkBC** – www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthy-eating
Call HealthLinkBC and ask to speak to a dietitian (Monday to Friday, 9AM-5PM).
☎ **8-1-1** (or 7-1-1 for the hearing impaired) ✉ [E-mail a HealthLinkBC Dietitian](#)
HealthLinkBC.ca: [COPD: Keeping Your Diet Healthy](#) | [COPD: Avoiding Weight Loss](#)

Find out More about Your Treatment Options

▶ MEDICATIONS

Medications cannot cure COPD, but they may reduce or relieve symptoms and decrease the risk of flare-ups and hospitalizations. Taking medications as prescribed is important, including proper use of your inhaler. Ask your doctor and/or pharmacist to observe and further instruct you on inhaler technique.

- ➔ **HealthLinkBC.ca:** [Medications and Tips for Using Inhalers](#) | **Lung.ca:** [Medicines for COPD](#)

▶ HOME OXYGEN PROGRAM

Oxygen is only needed by a small number of people with COPD, but may be prescribed by your doctor if the amount of oxygen in your blood is low. Talk to your doctor about whether the program is right for you.

- ➔ **HealthLinkBC.ca:** [Oxygen Treatment for COPD](#) | **Lung.ca:** [Oxygen Therapy for COPD](#)

▶ PULMONARY REHABILITATION

Pulmonary rehabilitation teaches people with COPD how to breathe easier and live better with COPD. Talk to your doctor about whether pulmonary rehabilitation is right for you.

- ➔ **HealthLinkBC.ca:** [Pulmonary Rehabilitation for COPD](#) | **Lung.ca:** [Pulmonary Rehabilitation](#)

Get Support

- ➔ **Lung Association COPD Helpline:** ☎ **1-866-717-COPD (2673)** (toll-free)
Speak to a certified respiratory educator for answers to questions on lung diseases and related matters.
- ➔ **BC Lung Association and Better Breathers Support Groups:** BC.lung.ca ☎ **1-866-665-5864** (toll-free)
BC Better Breathers are support groups for those with respiratory illness. They meet once every month and help patients with COPD to improve their lives through education, encouragement, and fellowship.
- ➔ **Self-Management BC:** www.SelfManagementBC.ca
Provides education and support to increase patient's skills and confidence in managing their health problems. Lists self-management programs available across BC.