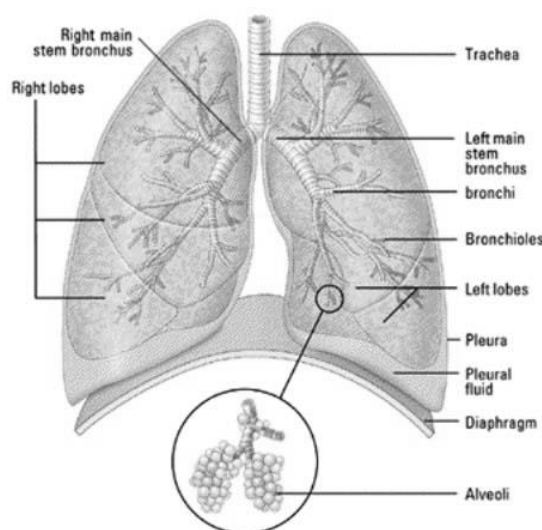


Patient information

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

What is COPD?

COPD is a common long-term lung disease, which includes the conditions of chronic asthma, chronic bronchitis and emphysema. They cause breathlessness and/or sputum production, due to narrowing of the airways.



Chronic Asthma is characterised by variable airflow obstruction, with symptoms of wheeze, cough, shortness of breath and chest tightness. **Chronic Bronchitis** is characterised by inflammation in the airways causing an increase in mucus production and troublesome coughing. **Emphysema** is characterised by air trapping in the lungs due to a loss of elasticity and enlargement of airways. This stops oxygen from being transported into the bloodstream and results in breathlessness.

Causes

COPD affects different people in different ways and the reasons you have it may be different. It tends to occur in older people and is strongly associated with smoking, but may also be caused by air pollution or occupational dust.

What Happens Inside the Lungs?

Mucus-secreting glands inside the lungs become enlarged, producing excess sputum which may block the airways. Any irritant such as smoking will cause over-production of

sputum. This is especially true of chronic bronchitis. In emphysema, the walls of the alveoli are damaged, causing floppy airways and air trapping, leading to breathlessness. The airways may also become inflamed or narrowed, blocking free passage of air in and out and further contributing to breathlessness.

Symptoms

- Cough, usually the first to develop
- Breathlessness, especially on activity
- Wheezing
- Coughing up sputum/phlegm

You may also feel fatigued, depressed, anxious or frustrated.

Main Approaches to Treatment

- Use your medication as prescribed
- Increase your fitness
- Learn to control your breathing/clear sputum effectively
- Eat healthily and conserve energy
- Prevent further damage by avoiding 'Triggers' e.g. stress or smoke polluted environments

See your Doctor if

- You use more of your medication than usual or it is less effective
- You think you may be getting a chest infection or your sputum changes in colour/consistency
- You stop doing activities you used to enjoy

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<http://www.disabledgo.com/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust/main>