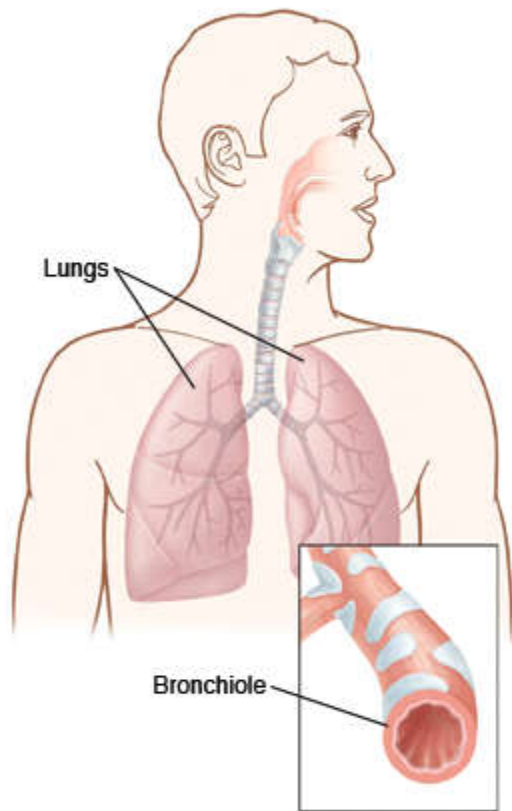


COPD Flare



You have had a flare-up of your COPD.

COPD, or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, is a common lung disease. It causes your airways to become irritated and narrower. This makes it harder for you to breathe. Emphysema and chronic bronchitis are both types of COPD. This is a chronic condition, which means you always have it. Sometimes it gets worse. When this happens, it is called a flare-up.

Symptoms of COPD

People with COPD may have symptoms most of the time. In a flare-up, your symptoms get worse. These symptoms may mean you are having a flare-up:

- Shortness of breath, shallow or rapid breathing, or wheezing that gets worse
- Lung infection
- Cough that gets worse
- More mucus, thicker mucus or mucus of a different color
- Tiredness, decreased energy, or trouble doing your usual activities
- Fever

- Chest tightness
- Your symptoms don't get better even when you use your usual medicines, inhalers, and nebulizer
- Trouble talking
- You feel confused

Causes of flare-ups

Unfortunately, a flare-up can happen even though you did everything right, and you followed your doctor's instructions. Some causes of flare-ups are:

- Smoking or secondhand smoke
- Colds, the flu, or respiratory infections
- Air pollution
- Sudden change in the weather
- Dust, irritating chemicals, or strong fumes
- Not taking your medicines as prescribed

Home care

Here are some things you can do at home to treat a flare-up:

- Try not to panic. This makes it harder to breathe, and keeps you from doing the right things.
- Don't smoke or be around others who are smoking.
- Try to drink more fluids than usual during a flare-up, unless your doctor has told you not to because of heart and kidney problems. More fluids can help loosen the mucus.
- Use your inhalers and nebulizer, if you have one, as you have been told to.
- If you were given antibiotics, take them until they are used up or your doctor tells you to stop. It's important to finish the antibiotics, even though you feel better. This will make sure the infection has cleared.
- If you were given prednisone or another steroid, finish it even if you feel better.

Preventing a flare-up

Even though flare-ups happen, the best way to treat one is to prevent it before it starts. Here are some pointers:

- Don't smoke or be around others who are smoking.
- Take your medicines as you have been told.

- Talk with your doctor about getting a flu shot every year. Also find out if you need a pneumonia shot.
- If there is a weather advisory warning to stay indoors, try to stay inside when possible.
- Try to eat healthy and get plenty of sleep.
- Try to avoid things that usually set you off, like dust, chemical fumes, hairsprays, or strong perfumes.

Follow-up care

Follow up with your healthcare provider, or as advised.

If a culture was done, you will be told if your treatment needs to be changed. You can call as directed for the results.

If X-rays were done, you will be notified of any new findings that may affect your care.

Call 911

Call 911 if any of these occur:

- You have trouble breathing
- You feel confused or it's difficult to wake you up
- You faint or lose consciousness
- You have a rapid heart rate
- You have new pain in your chest, arm, shoulder, neck or upper back

When to seek medical advice

Call your healthcare provider right away if any of these occur:

- Wheezing or shortness of breath gets worse
- You need to use your inhalers more often than usual without relief
- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, or as directed by your healthcare provider
- Coughing up lots of dark-colored or bloody mucus (sputum)
- Chest pain with each breath
- You do not start to get better within 24 hours
- Swelling of your ankles gets worse
- Dizziness or weakness

