

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) is lung disease associated with airflow obstructions that interfere with breathing. Emphysema, chronic bronchitis and chronic asthma fall into this category.

Symptoms

- Shortness of breath
- Difficulty breathing
- Coughing
- Daytime tiredness
- Wheezing

Statistics

According to COPD International:

- COPD is the 4th leading cause of death in the United States (after heart disease, cancer and strokes/ cerebrovascular disease).
- It is estimated that there are currently 16 million people in the United States diagnosed with COPD.
- It is estimated that an additional 14 million or more are still undiagnosed.
- Since 2000, women have exceeded men in the number of deaths attributable to COPD.
- Smoking is the primary risk factor for COPD. Approximately 80 to 90 percent of COPD deaths are caused by smoking. Smokers are 12 to 13 times more likely to die from COPD as those who have never smoked.

Management

The good news is that COPD, though considered a chronic and debilitating, can be managed, controlled and slowed down. The most important factors contributing to a longer and healthier lifestyle include, but are not limited to:

- Stopping smoking
- Early detection
- Healthy eating habits
- Exercise
- Medication regimen compliance: Bronchodilator medications (prescription drugs that relax and open air passages in the lungs) and oxygen therapy are central to the symptomatic management of COPD.