

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD).

A guide for patients.



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What is COPD?

COPD stands for Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, a term used to describe a range of progressive diseases that result in airway constriction and makes it difficult to breathe. The most common conditions are emphysema and chronic bronchitis, but COPD can also include refractory (non-reversible) asthma, and some forms of bronchiectasis.

What causes COPD?

Smoking is by far the most common cause of COPD, but it can also be caused by long term exposure to air pollution or to dust or chemicals.

How do I know if I have COPD?

People with COPD become increasingly breathless. You may also cough, wheeze, and produce excessive or abnormal sputum. A doctor can confirm whether you have COPD with a simple test called spirometry (spi-rom-e-tree), which tests how fast air can move in and out of your lungs.

What are the stages of COPD?

There are four stages of COPD, from mild to very severe*.

- **Stage 1.** Mild symptoms, like shortness of breath, but usually no cough or sputum. Many people do not realise they have a lung problem at this stage.
- **Stage 2.** Moderate to severe shortness of breath when you exert yourself. This is the point where many people seek medical advice.
- **Stage 3.** Severe symptoms, with greater shortness of breath. You may have a cough and sputum. Exercise is difficult and your quality of life suffers.
- **Stage 4.** Quality of life is severely affected by shortness of breath and episodes may even be life threatening.

COPD is a progressive disease so signs and symptoms may not be noticeable until the condition has considerably worsened. It is important to visit your family doctor as soon as you have trouble breathing or have an unexplained cough.

* As defined by The Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease (GOLD), www.goldcopd.org



How can COPD be treated?

As COPD is a chronic disease, it cannot be cured, but it can be managed. As well as medication and lifestyle changes, such as giving up smoking, your doctor may prescribe one of the following homecare therapies:

- **Oxygen therapy.** This could be in the form of an oxygen concentrator device at home, portable cylinders, or liquid oxygen device depending on your condition and lifestyle.
- **Non Invasive Positive Pressure Ventilation (NPPV).** This treatment uses gentle air pressure to mechanically assist or replace spontaneous breathing.
- **Pulmonary rehabilitation.** A programme of care, exercise, information and support to help you cope better with daily activities and stay independent.
- **Airway clearance.** Treatment with a medical device to help clear sputum by moving it towards your airway opening or cough clearance to remove secretions.

What should I do if I think I have COPD?

If you experience shortness of breath, a persistent cough, tiredness when exercising or during daily activities, or chest tightness, especially if you smoke or used to smoke, you should seek advice from your medical doctor.

How can Linde help?

Linde works alongside medical doctors and specialist consultants to provide tailored help for patients and their carers. Through our homecare services we provide equipment, education and support to improve your condition and quality of life at every stage.

Linde Healthcare in homecare.

Over a million people in more than 40 countries worldwide trust Linde Healthcare to provide responsive services designed around their needs. Our approach is based on treating every patient as an individual, maintaining dignity and privacy, and assuring that patients feel comfortable with the treatment approach. We work in close partnership with physicians, payers and other healthcare staff to secure the right treatment and always following the very highest ethical standards.

Linde: Living healthcare

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