



COPD

PATIENT SUPPORT

Lifestyle tips for living with COPD

This piece has been
reviewed by COPD
Support Ireland.



COPD
Support Ireland



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COPD & Me

Making gains with your health

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a very common lung disease. Quitting smoking, exercising, and eating healthy are key to reducing and managing the symptoms of COPD. In this leaflet you will learn about living a healthy life and gain a better understanding of the benefits of:

- **A healthy diet**
- **Exercise**
- **Avoiding exacerbations**
- **Keeping up with treatments**
- **Slowing down lung damage**

Tips on eating and energy

Eating a healthy diet is important for everyone, especially if you have COPD. Your body needs fuel in the form of food for activities like breathing. If you have COPD, your body needs more energy to breathe. There are many things you can do to get the right nutrients while maintaining a healthy weight:

- **Drink a lot of non-caffeinated or non-alcohol liquids**
- **Eat high-fibre foods like vegetables and whole grains**
- **Do not eat a lot of salt, use herbs instead**
- **Stay away from foods that cause gas or bloating (soda or fried foods)**



! *The muscles used for breathing in a person with COPD may need 10 times more calories than those of a person without COPD*

For people with COPD, it is important not to be overweight or underweight. Ask your doctor what your goal weight should be and work with him or her to come up with a diet and exercise plan to get there!

EXERCISE:

What's in it for me?

A common symptom of COPD is breathlessness.

Breathlessness is feeling short of breath or having trouble breathing. It may feel uncomfortable, but you should not be less active because of it. As part of your COPD treatment plan, your doctor may suggest you start exercising.

Regular exercise has many benefits and can:

- **Reduce breathlessness**
- **Reduce hospital stays**
- **Lower blood pressure**
- **Reduce anxiety and depression**
- **Lower rates of infection**
- **Improve circulation**
- **Increase your energy for daily tasks**
- **Strengthen your heart and muscles**
- **Improve sleep**
- **Help you lose weight**

All kinds of exercise are good for people with COPD. It's important to choose an exercise you enjoy. Take a walk with your dog, do some gardening, or dance to your favourite music. The less exercising feels like work, the more you'll want to do it.

WORK WITH YOUR DOCTOR TO CHOOSE A TYPE OF EXERCISE THAT YOU'LL ENJOY

People with all stages of COPD can benefit from exercise

Am I having an exacerbation?

Some people with COPD may experience episodes where symptoms get much worse. These episodes are called exacerbations. The signs and symptoms of an exacerbation may be:

- **Increased breathlessness**
- **Increased coughing**
- **Increased mucus**
- **Change in mucus colour**
- **Wheezing**
- **Chest tightness**
- **Fever**

Exacerbations are usually caused by an infection or inhaling some pollution. But sometimes the cause is not found. Being able to recognize an exacerbation is important. Treating them early is the key to a successful recovery. Having a plan for what to do in case of an exacerbation is very helpful. Work with your doctor to make an action plan that is right for you.



Always let your doctor know when your symptoms suddenly get worse so you can get the right treatment

Stick, don't skip

Along with exercise, diet, and not smoking, sticking to your prescribed treatment is an important part of treating the symptoms of COPD. Living with COPD can be difficult, but you are not alone if you've missed or skipped a treatment. If you're having problems sticking with your COPD treatment or using your inhaler correctly, talk with your doctor so that he or she can help you. This is important because skipping treatments can make your breathing symptoms worse, cause more hospitalisations, and can worsen your overall health.

Can I slow down the damage of COPD?

The most common cause of COPD is smoking cigarettes, so the most important thing you can do if you still smoke is stop. Quitting smoking is the single most effective way to slow down your loss of lung function in COPD. You can also slow down the damage of COPD by:

- **Talking to your doctor about**
 - Support for quitting smoking
 - Preventing exacerbations
 - What's best for your lungs
- **Making sure to get routine vaccinations for influenza and pneumonia**
- **Staying active**
- **Eating healthy meals**

THERE ARE MANY THINGS YOU CAN DO TO OPEN UP YOUR AIRWAYS, INCLUDING EXERCISING, EATING HEALTHY, AND TAKING YOUR MEDICATION AS PRESCRIBED

*It is never too late to quit smoking!
Patients who quit add as much as 8 years
to their lifespan.*

For help to quit smoking call the National Smokers' Qitline on 1850 201 203 or visit www.quit.ie



A number of Patient Support Groups open to anyone living with COPD are in place nationwide including Dublin, Bray, Louth, Clare, Sligo, Mayo, Cork & Waterford.

Please contact COPD Support Ireland for further information on group meetings & services available in your area.

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