

Diagnosing COPD

COPD is diagnosed with a simple and painless breathing test called spirometry. When doing the test the patient will be asked to breathe as hard as they can into a machine. This measures the amount of air that they can force out of their lungs in one second as well as the total amount of air that they can force out of their lungs. From the results of this test the doctor will be able to tell if the airways have narrowed.

Although COPD cannot be cured, **its progress can be dramatically reduced** and its symptoms can be treated and managed with medications and exercise. This, in turn, will improve the overall quality of your life.

Treating COPD

There are a number of treatments available for COPD but the main thing that you can do to help your condition is:

- If you smoke - seek help in stopping
- Take daily exercise
- Get the annual flu vaccination
- If prescribed an inhaler, make sure that you are confident in how to use it. Ask your doctor as often as you need to



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Do you become breathless easily?
You could have COPD

Could This be You?

You may have noticed that you are feeling more out of breath, tired, or have been troubled by repeated chest infections. You may have noticed that you can't do as much as a person of similar age and build.

You may have had a cough with mucus (phlegm) for many years, or have become aware that your breathing has gradually gotten more difficult. As this condition affects lifestyle so gradually, you may not have noticed that you have stopped doing the things that you used to do, like dancing, taking walks or gardening.



You could be suffering from Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD).

What is COPD?

COPD is a disease that makes it hard to empty air out of your lungs. This is because the airways are narrower than normal leading to airflow obstruction. This can result in cough or shortness of breath or tiredness because you are working harder to breathe. COPD is a term used to include chronic bronchitis, emphysema or a combination of both conditions.

You Are Not Alone

- It is estimated that 380,000 people in Ireland are affected by COPD
- COPD mostly affects those over the age of 35
- Many people with COPD, but not all, are smokers or have smoked in the past
- An inherited condition called Alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency can also cause COPD but it is relatively uncommon

Signs and Symptoms

People can experience COPD in different ways depending on which symptoms trouble them most and how severe their disease is. COPD is progressive meaning it has several stages of severity. It tends to creep up on people slowly. This means that it can often be several years before symptoms reach a level that the person will seek a diagnosis for a problem or that the doctor will think of COPD. Symptoms such as coughing, wheezing and shortness of breath are often attributed to other causes.

Mild COPD

- Frequent coughing sometimes with mucus (phlegm)
- Mild breathlessness from physical work or brisk walking

Moderate COPD

- Coughing becomes more frequent and more mucus is produced
- Breathlessness occurs more often from activities such as physical work or brisk walking
- A cold or chest infection can last for several weeks

Severe COPD

- Increased coughing and production of mucus
- Difficulty breathing
- Work or doing household chores cause major problems
- Difficulty climbing a stairs or crossing a room
- Tire very easily

Are You at Risk?

If you answer yes to four or more of the following questions you should visit your doctor and ask to be tested for COPD.

- 1 Do you cough several times every day, several days of the week?
- 2 Have you been coughing like this for more than three months?
- 3 Do you cough up mucus (phlegm) most days?
- 4 Do you feel breathless from physical work or moderate exercise?
- 5 Are you a current or former smoker?
- 6 Do you work, or have you ever worked, in an environment where there is exposure to pollution, fumes, dust or smoke?
- 7 Is there a history of lung conditions in your family?
- 8 Are you over the age of 35?

If you feel that you have COPD, you should talk to your family doctor and Save Your Breath!