

# COPD

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A program of the National Institutes of Health.



## THINK IT MIGHT BE COPD? IT'S TIME TO SPEAK WITH YOUR DOCTOR.

As soon as you notice the signs and symptoms of COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease) in yourself or a loved one, make an appointment with your doctor or health care provider. Acting early is essential to taking control of the disease so you can live better with it.

Follow these tips to make sure you get the most out of your office visit.

### 1) LEARN ABOUT COPD SYMPTOMS BEFORE YOUR APPOINTMENT.

Learning about COPD symptoms gives you a better understanding when talking with your health care provider. You may want to keep a log of your symptoms for the days or weeks before your appointment and bring it with you. Include details of what you were doing when you experienced any of these COPD symptoms and how long they lasted:

- Shortness of breath during everyday activities
- Feeling like you can't breathe
- Not being able to take a deep breath
- Constant coughing, sometimes called "smoker's cough"
- Wheezing
- Excess sputum production



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and symptoms of COPD in yourself or a loved one, it's time to make an appointment with your doctor or health care provider. Acting early is essential to getting control of the disease so you can live better with it.

It's not always easy to get all the information you need in the brief time of a typical office visit. Follow these five tips to make the most of it.



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## 2) UNDERSTAND YOUR RISK FACTORS FOR COPD AND DISCUSS THEM WITH YOUR DOCTOR.

A history of smoking is one of the main risk factors for developing COPD but it's not the only one. Long-term exposure to pollution, certain chemicals and dusts may cause COPD. There are also some genetic conditions that cause the disease. Share all the risk factors you may have, as complete information will only help your provider give you the best care.

## 3) KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT BEFORE THE VISIT.

If you do have symptoms of COPD, you may need to take a breathing test to determine whether you have the disease. Called spirometry, this quick, noninvasive test can be done in the provider's office.

## 4) BRING YOUR QUESTIONS AND A NOTEPAD.

Before your appointment, write down questions you have about COPD and bring them with you. Take notes during the visit, and don't be afraid to ask the provider to repeat something if you don't understand it. A few questions to include may be:

- How will I know for sure if I have COPD?
- How will you treat my COPD?
- What are the side effects of the treatments?
- Are there things I can change to make life with COPD easier?

## 5) DON'T GO ALONE.

If possible, bring a family member or friend with you. Two sets of ears are always better than one when hearing information about your health.

## 6) LEARN MORE ABOUT THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE.

Visit the ***COPD Learn More Breathe Better* website**: [COPD.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://COPD.nhlbi.nih.gov) or the **COPD Foundation website**: [www.copdfoundation.org](http://www.copdfoundation.org) at any time to learn more about COPD and to see what resources and support may be available in your area. The COPD Foundation also has a toll-free **COPD Information Line 1-866-316-COPD (2673)** which offers one-on-one support, peer-to-peer information and referrals on COPD by patients and caregivers impacted by the disease.



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is a program of the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute. It was created to help people diagnosed with and at risk for COPD to become informed about the disease and ways to live better with it.

For more information and free, downloadable materials, visit:

**[COPD.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://COPD.nhlbi.nih.gov)**

Contact the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute at:

**[nhlbi.nih.gov](http://nhlbi.nih.gov)**