

2022

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

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Cobequid Community
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What is COPD?

- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a progressive (gets worse over time) lung disorder. It can be:
 - › Chronic (ongoing) bronchitis
 - › Emphysema
 - › A combination of both
- **Chronic bronchitis** is inflammation (irritation, reddening, and swelling) of the airways (breathing passages) in the lungs. This causes them to become swollen with thick, sticky mucus. The mucus can block the airways and may keep the lungs from emptying fully when you breathe.
- **Emphysema** is damage to the alveoli (small air sacs in the lungs). This stops the lungs from emptying fully. It can also make it hard to get oxygen into your body.

Who is at risk of developing COPD?

- You are most at risk of developing COPD if you:
 - › Are 40 years of age or older
 - › Smoke or used to smoke

- Cigarette smoke can damage your lungs. It is the leading cause of COPD.
- Not all people who smoke (or who have smoked in the past) notice problems with their breathing right away. It usually takes years to develop symptoms of COPD.

Symptoms of COPD include:

- › Coughing up sputum (mucus) on most days
- › Frequent chest/lung infections
- › Wheezing
- › Shortness of breath when exercising or doing daily activities

How is COPD diagnosed?

- Your primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) will ask about your medical history and do a physical exam.
- You will also have a simple breathing test called spirometry. Your primary health care provider or respirologist (doctor who specializes in lung disease) can order a spirometry test.

How is COPD managed?

Managing COPD can include:

- **Stopping smoking**

For more information, visit:

- › <https://mha.nshealth.ca/en/topics/substance-use-and-gambling/nicotine-tobacco>

- **Medication(s)**

These may include an inhaler (device used to breathe in medication) and/or oral (taken by mouth) medication(s).

- **Vaccinations**


These may include a yearly flu vaccine and a pneumococcal (pneumonia) vaccine.

- **Physical activity** (strength, cardio, and chair exercises)

- **Pulmonary rehabilitation exercises**

Pulmonary rehabilitation is available at the Cobequid Community Health Centre.

For more information:

- › Phone: 902-869-6140
 - › <https://library.nshealth.ca/Pulmonary-Rehab>
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COPD education

Goals of COPD education include:

- › Preventing disease progression
- › Preventing or relieving shortness of breath
- › Improving your ability to exercise
- › Lowering the number of flare-ups
- › Improving quality of life
- › Lowering the amount of time spent in the hospital

To get started:

- Ask your primary health care provider to fill out a referral form and mail (see address on front cover) or fax it to Respiratory Services:
 - › Fax: 902-865-6073
- We will call you with an appointment time.
- You can also call Respiratory Services and make an appointment yourself.

- For more information about COPD education, call the Respiratory Educator:
 - › Phone: 902-869-6140

To learn more about COPD, visit:
› www.livingwellwithCOPD.com

Looking for more health information?

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here:

<https://library.nshealth.ca/PatientEducation>

Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources. For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:

Call 811 or visit <https://811.novascotia.ca>

Learn about other programs and services in your community:

Call 211 or visit <http://ns.211.ca>

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www.nshealth.ca

*Prepared by: Respiratory Services, Cobequid Community Health Centre
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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.

