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COPD

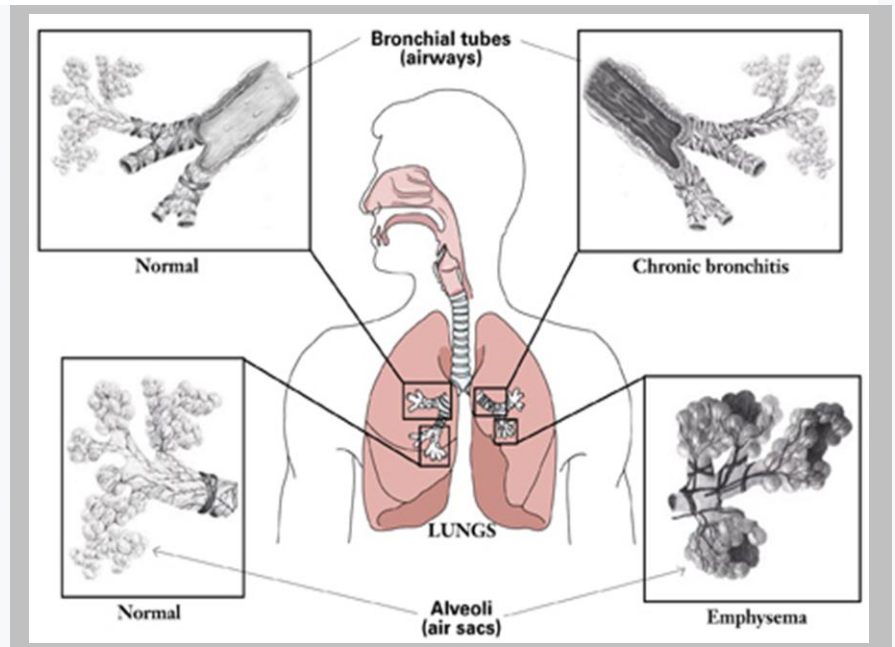
WHAT IS COPD?

COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease) is a lung disease that leads to shortness of breath. It is caused by damage to the lungs over many years, usually from smoking.

COPD is a mixture of two diseases:

1. **Chronic Bronchitis:** In chronic bronchitis, the airways that carry air to the lungs get inflamed and make a lot of mucus. This can narrow or block the airways, making it hard for you to breathe.
2. **Emphysema:** In a healthy person, the tiny air sacs in the lungs are like balloons. As you breathe in and out, they get bigger and smaller to move air through your lungs. But with emphysema, these air sacs are damaged and lose their stretch. Less air gets in and out of the lungs, which makes you feel short of breath.

COPD get worse with time, however you can take steps to prevent more damage and to feel better.



WHAT CAUSES COPD?

COPD is almost always caused by smoking. Over time, breathing tobacco smoke irritates the airways and destroys the stretchy fibers in the lungs.

Other things that may put you at risk include breathing chemical fumes, dust, or air pollution over a long period of time. Secondhand smoke is also bad.

It usually takes many years for the lung damage to start causing symptoms, so COPD is most common in people who are older than 60.

You may be more likely to get COPD if you had a lot of serious lung infections when you were a child. People who get emphysema in their 30s or 40s may have a disorder that runs in families, called alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency. But this is rare

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WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS & SIGNS OF COPD?

Main Symptoms:

- A long-lasting (chronic) cough.
- Mucus that comes up when you cough.
- Shortness of breath that gets worse when you exercise
- Wheezing
- chest tightness
- tiredness

As COPD gets worse, you may be short of breath even when you do simple things like get dressed or fix a meal. It gets harder to eat or exercise, and breathing takes much more energy. People often lose weight and get weaker.

At times, your symptoms may suddenly flare up and get much worse. This is called a COPD exacerbation. An exacerbation can range from mild to life-threatening. The longer you have COPD, the more severe these flare-ups will be.

HOW IS COPD TREATED?

How is COPD Diagnosed?

To find out if you have COPD, a doctor will:

- Do a physical exam and listen to your lungs.
- Ask you questions about your past health and whether you smoke or have been exposed to other things that can irritate your lungs.
- Have you do breathing tests, including spirometry, to find out how well your lungs work.
- Do chest X-rays and other tests to help rule out other problems that could be causing your symptoms.

Treatments:

The only way to slow COPD is to quit smoking. This is the most important thing you can do. It is never too late to quit. No matter how long you have smoked or how serious your COPD is, quitting smoking can help stop the damage to your lungs.

It's hard to quit smoking. Talk to your doctor about treatments that can help. To learn more about how to quit, go to www.smokefree.gov, or call 1-800-QUITNOW (1-800-784-8669).

Your doctor can prescribe treatments for COPD.

- Medicines can help you breathe easier. Most of them are inhaled so they go straight to your lungs.
- A lung (pulmonary) rehab program can help you learn to manage your disease.
- In time, you may need to use oxygen some or most of the time.
- Avoid things that can irritate your lungs, such as smoke, pollution, and air that is cold and dry.
- Get regular exercise to stay as strong as you can.
- Eat well so you can keep up your strength.
- Take rest breaks during the day