



COPD

(Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease)



What is COPD?

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) is a common lung problem. In COPD, the flow of air from the lungs is limited. This is because of excess mucus, swelling and collapsed airways.

Causes

The most common cause of COPD is smoking. Quitting is the best way to slow lung damage. Other causes of COPD include:

- Exposure to secondhand smoke.
- Genetic problems including Alpha 1 antitrypsin (AAT) deficiency.
- Chronic inflammatory lung diseases or infection.

Treatments

Medicines used to treat COPD include:

- Inhalers to help open the airways.
- Inhaled or oral steroids to reduce lung inflammation.
- Anti-inflammatory drugs to reduce swelling in the airways.
- Oxygen. Suggested oxygen saturation goal in COPD patients is 88–92% unless mentioned otherwise.

Understanding COPD Flare-Ups

Warning Signs of COPD Flare-Ups

- More shortness of breath than usual.
- You have less energy for daily activities.
- You are using your rescue inhaler/nebulizer more often.
- You have increase in cough and/or mucus.
- Mucus is thicker and has changed color.
- Your appetite is not good.
- Your daily maintenance medications are not helping.
- You have a fever.
- If you have a full-blown exacerbation, you might need to go to the hospital.

How to Prevent COPD Flare-Ups

- Take your medicines as directed.
- Avoid poor air quality, extremes of temperature and all aerosol sprays.
- Stay away from sick people.
- Wash your hands often.
- Get your flu and pneumonia vaccinations.



Your COPD Medications

Maintenance Medications

These medications control your symptoms and should be taken whether you are feeling good or feeling bad. Regular use of these medications everyday will prevent and reduce flare-ups.

Quick-relief Medications

These medications, also known as rescue medications, can be taken in between your maintenance medications or anytime you have trouble breathing.

Respiratory Medication Devices

An inhaler is a quick way of administering medication directly into your lungs. Always bring your rescue inhaler if you leave the house.

Do you have a spacer? A spacer is a holding chamber that attaches to your inhaler so you receive more of your medication from your inhaler.

Breathing Training

Pursed Lip Breathing helps calm you when you are short of breath by slowing your breathing and providing more oxygen-rich blood.

How to do pursed lip breathing:

- Sit in a comfortable chair with your feet on the floor.
- Inhale slowly through your nose for two counts.
- Feel your belly get larger as you breathe in.
- Pucker your lips as if you were going to whistle or blow out a candle.
- Exhale slowly through your lips for four or more counts.
- Repeat these steps until your breathing calms.

Practice pursed lip breathing even when you are feeling well.

Understanding COPD and Healthy Living

Exercise

Being active can build your strength so you can breathe easier.

- Start slow and know your baseline.
- Talk to your doctor about what kind of exercise is right for you.

Nutrition

Eat whenever you are hungry. Divide your daily food into 5-6 small meals. Choose healthy options when selecting foods. You are encouraged to divide your meals into smaller portions throughout the day to prevent feeling too full which may cause you to feel short of breath.

Benefits of Pulmonary Rehabilitation

- Fewer hospitalizations.
- Higher levels of physical activity.
- Fewer breathing complications and symptoms.
- Better self-image.

Advance Care Directives and Living Will

St. Elizabeth recommends everyone over the age of 18 have an advance care plan. This includes preparing for the healthcare you would want if you can no longer speak for yourself. It's important to review and update the plan with any major life event, such as learning you have COPD. With COPD, your healthcare wishes and choices will change over time. It's important to have several conversations with your healthcare team and the person you designate to make decisions for you should you be unable to speak for yourself. Together, you and your doctors collaborate to make sure the care you receive is the care you desire.

