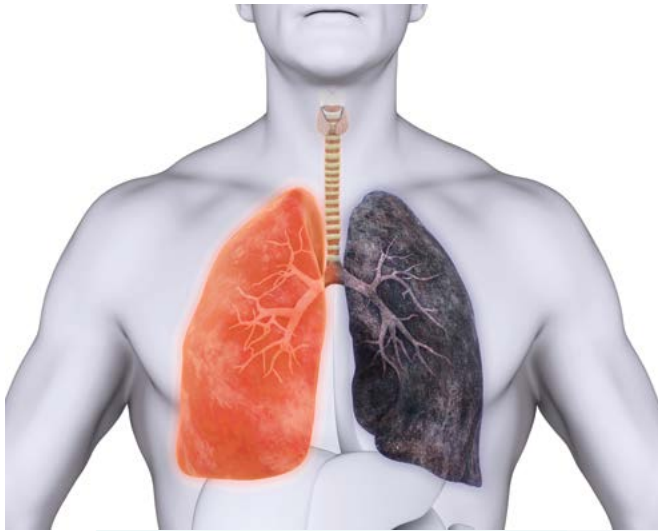


# Living with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

COPD is a type of lung disease that gets worse over time. People with COPD feel short of breath doing activities that normally would be easy to do. COPD cannot be cured. You will be able to manage your COPD and breathe better with the right treatment.



COPD is usually caused by inhaling pollutants, such as tobacco smoke and second-hand smoke. In the United States, smoking is the leading cause of COPD.

Symptoms of COPD can include any of the following:

- Shortness of breath with or without activity
- Frequent coughing with or without sputum
- Wheezing
- Tightness in chest

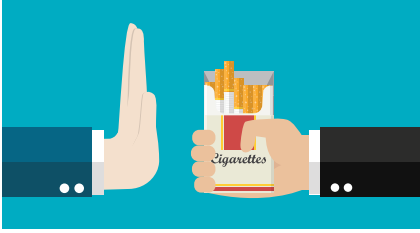
## Treating COPD can

- Make it easier to do normal daily activities
- Improve symptoms
- Help you stay out of the hospital
- Slow the progression of the disease
- Lower the risk of flare ups

## COPD can be managed by

- Not smoking
- Medicine/inhalers
- Starting other lifestyle changes:
  - exercise
  - adequate sleep
  - healthy diet
  - stay up-to-date with your vaccines
  - pulmonary rehabilitation
- Follow your action plan when your symptoms worsen

## Stop smoking



COPD symptoms get worse over time. The best way to slow this down is to quit smoking.

- Smoking includes cigarettes, pipes, cigars, and marijuana.
- Vaping and electronic cigarettes may also make COPD symptoms worse.

Ask your health care team about medicines to help you quit smoking. Combining medicine with support programs can increase your chance of quitting for good.

The VA has a telephone Quitline: **1-855-QUIT-VET (1-855-784-8838)**. Call for support.

## Other ways to help you stay healthy



### Vaccines

- Get your flu shot every year.
- Talk with your provider about the pneumonia vaccine and other vaccines that might help you stay healthy.
- Stay up-to-date on routine vaccines.



### Healthy Diet

- Eating a healthy diet will help you feel better.
- Ask your provider if you may benefit from seeing a dietitian.



### Exercise

- Being more physically active may help you feel better.
- Ask your provider what kinds of activities or exercises are safe for you.



### Have an Action Plan

- An action plan will help you know if you need to increase your use of inhalers, take additional medicines, or see a provider for severe symptoms.
- Work with your health care team on a plan you can follow at home.



### Pulmonary Rehabilitation

- Includes education and exercise to improve lung function, breathing, and quality of life.
- It can help you breathe better, gain strength, and keep you out of the hospital.




### Sleep

- Try to get at least 8 hours of sleep every night.
- If you are interested in improving your sleep, check out the VA Program: **SleepEZ**



## Medicines/inhalers?

Inhalers can help you feel better, do more activities, and may help you live longer. Your provider may prescribe more than one inhaler based on your symptoms. Inhalers should be used correctly to work the best. You can find VA instructional videos by clicking on each inhaler device: [Combivent Respimat](#), [Pressurized Metered-Dose Inhaler](#), [HandiHaler](#), [Mometasone Twisthaler](#), [How to Use a Nebulizer](#), [Wixela Inhub Inhaler](#)). Videos can also be found at the Veterans Health Library. 

### Rescue inhalers/nebulizers

#### Short-acting Beta Agonists (SABA)

Albuterol (Proventil<sup>®</sup>, Ventolin<sup>®</sup>, ProAir<sup>®</sup>)  
Levalbuterol (Xopenex<sup>®</sup>)

#### Short-acting Muscarinic Antagonists (SAMA)

Ipratropium (Atrovent<sup>®</sup>)

**Use when needed to help with symptoms. Rescue inhalers/nebulizers:**

- Quickly open the lungs so you can breathe better.

**I am taking:**

### Daily inhalers

#### Long-acting Muscarinic Antagonist (LAMA)

Tiotropium (Spiriva<sup>®</sup>)

#### Long-acting Beta 2 Agonist (LABA)

Olodaterol (Striverdi<sup>®</sup>)

#### Combination LAMA + LABA Inhaler

Olodaterol/Tiotropium (Stiolto<sup>®</sup>)

**Daily use of these inhaler(s) will:**

- Improve your lung function and reduce shortness of breath
- Improve overall health and keep you out of the hospital

**I am taking:**

A corticosteroid inhaler (e.g., mometasone or fluticasone) may be added to your daily inhalers if you have:

- Symptoms or flare-ups not controlled using daily inhalers
- A diagnosis of asthma



**Corticosteroids have a risk of causing thrush (oral fungal infection) in your mouth. Rinse your mouth with water after each use to reduce the risk of thrush.**

### Note

It is important to tell your health care team about all medicines, vitamins, and supplements you are taking. Let them know if you are having any side effects or difficulties with your medicine.

**COPD Action Plan. Your health care team can help you fill this out.**

Every day	Your symptoms are under control
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take your medicines as instructed</li> <li>• Rest when needed</li> <li>• Keep all medical appointments</li> <li>• Manage flare-ups by reducing stress and controlling breathing</li> </ul>	<p><b>Which zone are you in today?</b></p> <p><b>GREEN</b></p> <p><b>YELLOW</b></p> <p><b>RED</b></p>
<p><b>Green is GREAT!</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><b>GREEN</b> means your COPD is under control.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breathing is normal</li> <li>• Usual level of coughing and mucus</li> <li>• Able to do daily activities</li> <li>• Sleep well and good appetite</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Continue taking your daily medicine(s)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Continue your regular exercise and diet plan</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Avoid tobacco smoke and other inhaled irritants</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use oxygen if prescribed by your provider</li> </ul>
<p><b>Yellow is CAUTION.</b> <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><b>YELLOW</b> means <b>CALL</b> or <b>TALK</b> with your health care team. Action is needed to prevent an emergency.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More breathless than usual</li> <li>• Increased cough</li> <li>• Change in color, thickness, odor, or amount of mucus</li> <li>• Feel like I have a chest cold</li> <li>• Difficulty doing daily activities</li> <li>• Sleep is poor</li> <li>• Appetite is less than normal</li> <li>• More swelling in feet, ankles, or legs</li> <li>• Using rescue inhaler more often</li> <li>• Medicines do not seem to help</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Call your VA Case Manager at: _____</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Outside of clinic hours call: _____</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use GREEN ZONE medicines and oxygen as prescribed</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use rescue inhaler or nebulizer every ___ hours as needed</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Get plenty of rest and use pursed lip breathing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Avoid secondhand smoke, e-cigarette/vape aerosol</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Start an oral corticosteroid (specify name, dose, duration) _____</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Start an antibiotic (specify name, dose, duration) _____</li> </ul>
<p><b>Red is EMERGENCY!</b> <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><b>RED</b> means <b>GET HELP</b> immediately!</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Severe shortness of breath, wheezing, or coughing</li> <li>• Yellow, green, bloody, or smelly mucus</li> <li>• Fever or chills</li> <li>• Tightness in your chest that does not go away with medicine or rest</li> <li>• Not able to talk, sleep, or do any activity</li> <li>• Feeling confused or very drowsy</li> <li>• Rescue inhaler does not help</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Call 911 or seek medical care right away.</li> <li>✓ If you go to an emergency department or hospital, tell them you are a Veteran and are a patient at the VA.</li> <li>✓ While getting help, do the following: _____ _____ _____</li> <li>✓ When you go home, contact your VA health care team.</li> </ul>

Please call \_\_\_\_\_ with any questions or concerns.

