

COPD

Definition

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) is a common lung disease affecting 16 million Americans and the number is growing. It describes a group of lung conditions that result from long-term exposure to irritants, repeated infections, and, rarely genetic factors. Long-term cigarette smoking causes nearly all cases of COPD. It takes many years for COPD to develop before people need medical help. Most people begin to feel the disease symptoms between 50 and 70 years of age.

Doctors use the term COPD to describe two different diseases – emphysema and chronic bronchitis – because many people with COPD have a combination of these two diseases. In addition, some people with COPD may also have asthma-like symptoms or reactive airway disease. People with COPD may have worsening attacks from time to time, called acute exacerbations.

Signs and symptoms

People usually notice problems with coughing or phlegm and then breathlessness (shortness of breath) during activity such as stair-climbing and walking uphill. Overtime breathlessness worsens. The oxygen levels in the blood may fall and carbon dioxide levels may rise which can cause tiredness, poor concentration, and heart strain.

Treatment options.

- Limit exposure to harmful chemicals, quit smoking.
- Get regular exercise
- Eat well-balanced meals
- Get enough rest

- Take prescribed medications
- Other treatments such as antibiotics, vaccinations, pulmonary rehabilitation, oxygen therapy, and possibly surgery.

Links

- www.thoracic.org
- www.goldcopd.com
- www.nationaljewish.org
- www.smokefree.gov/talk.html
- www.yourlunghealth.org
- www.copdresourcenetwork.org
- www.lungusa.org
- www.centerwatch.com
- www.nhlbi.nih.gov