

COPD

Overview

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a lung disease that makes it hard to breathe. With COPD, the airways that lead to the lungs may be narrowed, and the tiny air sacs in the lungs may be damaged and lose their stretch.

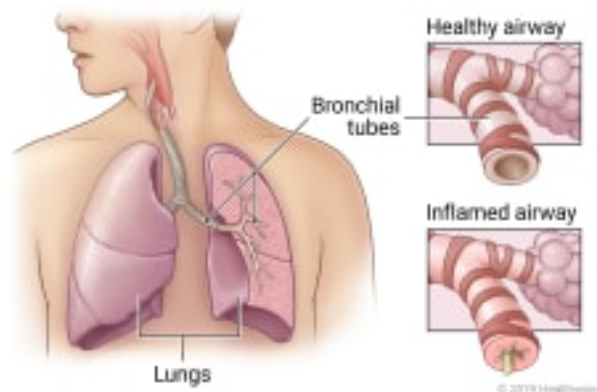
People with COPD have decreased airflow in and out of the lungs, which makes it hard to breathe. The airways also can get clogged with thick mucus. Cigarette smoking is a major cause of COPD.

Treatment can help you feel better and prevent symptoms from getting worse quickly. Some treatments may also slow the disease and help you live longer.

Types of COPD

Chronic bronchitis and emphysema are two lung problems that are types of COPD.

- **Chronic bronchitis.** The airways that carry air to the lungs (bronchial tubes) get inflamed and make a lot of mucus. This can narrow or block the airways, making it hard for you to breathe. It can also make you cough.
- **Emphysema.** With this disease, the tiny air sacs in the lungs are damaged and lose their stretch. Less air gets in and out of the lungs, which makes you feel short of breath.



Things that put you at risk for COPD include:

- **Tobacco smoking.** Tobacco smoking is the most important risk factor for COPD. The risk for COPD increases with both the amount of tobacco you smoke each day and the number of years you have smoked.
- **Asthma.** Asthma and COPD are different diseases, even though both of them involve breathing problems. People with asthma may have a greater risk for getting COPD. The reasons for this are not fully understood.
- **Breathing in things that can irritate your lungs.** These things include chemical fumes, factory dust, soot, secondhand smoke, or air pollution over a long period of time.