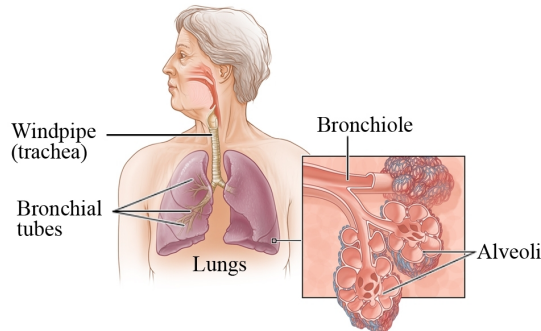


COPD



Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is an illness that makes it hard to breathe because air does not flow easily out of your lungs. Over time, COPD gets worse and may lead to severe shortness of breath, heart problems, and even death.

COPD cannot be cured, but it can be managed. The best way to slow the disease is to stop smoking. Medicines may reduce or relieve symptoms. Lifestyle changes, such as exercising, doing breathing exercises, and taking rest breaks, may also help you feel better.

Lung surgery is rarely used to treat COPD. Surgery is usually only considered for people who have severe COPD that has not improved with other treatment.

Lung problems linked to COPD

Chronic bronchitis and emphysema are two lung problems that often lead to COPD. Both of these can be caused by smoking tobacco. Most people who get COPD are smokers.

- **Chronic bronchitis** is an inflammation that narrows the tubes that carry air to the lungs, making it hard to breathe. The main symptom is a cough that brings up mucus.
- **Emphysema** occurs when the tiny air sacs in the lungs are damaged, trapping air in the lungs. This leads to difficulty breathing and shortness of breath that gets worse over time. The damage in the lungs is permanent and cannot be cured.

COPD can also be caused by other lung problems.

- **Inhaling lung irritants** over a long period of time can lead to COPD. Examples include secondhand smoke, air pollution, industrial dust, and chemical fumes.
- **Having a lot of serious lung infections as a child** can lead to COPD. 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.

Some people with COPD may also have asthma. But the two conditions differ in a number of ways, including how old you are when you get the disease and what triggers an attack.