



## Health Condition Factsheet Updated May 2020

# Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

## What is it?

COPD, or Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, describes a range of lung diseases, including emphysema, chronic bronchitis, non-reversible asthma and some forms of bronchiectasis.

COPD makes it hard for you to breathe. You can also experience tightness in the chest and wheezing. Smoking is the main cause of COPD.

While there's no cure, treatment helps to improve symptoms and your quality of life. It's important to get treatment as the condition can lead to heart problems and infections.

## What will my GP do now?

Your GP will determine if your condition is mild, moderate or severe before developing a treatment plan for you. Your treatment plan will help to reduce the symptoms and risk factors.

Your GP will also:

- Give you the results of any tests
- Help you learn how to recognise and manage dangerous symptoms
- Review your diet and weight, and give you a referral for a dietitian if needed
- Prescribe medication if necessary
- Consider any factors at home or work that might be making your symptoms worse
- Help you develop a [COPD Action Plan](#)
- Offer you tools to help you quit smoking

## What will my GP do in the future?

Your GP will see you regularly to monitor your symptoms, medications and action plan. Your GP may take more tests and X-rays if there is a change in your symptoms over time.

If your symptoms aren't improving, your GP might refer you to a lung specialist or other treatment program.

## What can I do?

When you have COPD, it's very important to quit smoking - phone 13QUIT to get started. You should also aim to avoid dust where possible.

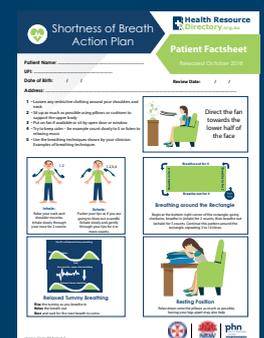
Follow the advice in your COPD Action Plan, and continue to take any prescribed medication. Check with your GP and pharmacist that you are using your medication correctly. See your GP regularly for check-ups.

Speak to your GP about regular exercise and a healthy diet - you may wish to see a dietitian.

## Shortness of Breath Action Plan

Download a copy of the [shortness of breath action plan](#) for strategies to deal with shortness of breath.

Take it to your doctor to discuss medications and these can be written on the back.



## When should I call an ambulance?



Phone Triple 0 (000) immediately if you are feeling much more short of breath than usual, you have severe chest pain, your chest pain is getting worse or you are coughing up large amounts of bright red blood.

# Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease

## What supports are available?

### Hospital Respiratory Clinics

The following hospital clinics provide assessment and treatment for COPD:

- **Bankstown Hospital Respiratory Clinic:** Phone **9722 8243**
- **Bowral Hospital Respiratory Clinic:** Phone **4861 0181**
- **Camden Hospital Respiratory Clinic:** Phone **4654 6174**
- **Campbelltown Hospital Respiratory Clinic:** Phone **4634 4963**
- **Fairfield Hospital Ambulatory Care Unit:** Phone **9616 8999**
- **Liverpool Hospital Department of Respiratory and Sleep Medicine:** Phone **8738 4101**

### Telemonitoring Program

Telemonitoring is a free program giving you devices to monitor your COPD at home. Through this program, your GP receives daily reports of your vital signs. If you develop any risky symptoms, your GP and the program team are notified. Ask your GP to refer you, or phone **1800 455 511** to learn more.

### Private Specialists

Ask your GP about a referral to a private respiratory specialist.

## What questions could I ask my doctor?

How can I avoid making my COPD worse?

How can I get help to quit smoking?

What could be making my COPD worse at home?

What symptoms should I look out for?

What do I do if I am struggling to breathe?

Am I taking my medication the right way?

What are the side effects of my medications?

Do I need to change my diet?

## Where can I learn more?

If you'd like to read more about COPD, these Australian Lung Foundation factsheets can help:

- **Australian Lung Foundation:** [lungfoundation.com.au](http://lungfoundation.com.au)
  - COPD resources
  - Better Living with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease
  - Lung Foundation Australia: Information & Support
  - Getting started on Home Oxygen
- **copdfoundation.org:** [copdfoundation.org](http://copdfoundation.org)
- **copd-international.com:** [copd-international.com](http://copd-international.com)

This information is to be viewed by someone who has received a diagnosis from their doctor. It is not designed to be used to diagnose a condition or as a substitute for ongoing medical care

Health Resource Directory factsheets are endorsed by South Western Sydney PHN's Community Advisory Committee and local GPs

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