

# Care Gram

# COPD

## (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease)

### What Is COPD?

COPD is a lung disease that affects millions of people. It includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis. Both of these are most often caused by heavy cigarette smoking.

When you have COPD, increased phlegm and narrow airways make it hard to expel air from the lungs (breathe out). In addition, there often is damage to the small air sacs in the lung. This increases the work of breathing and causes shortness of breath. This disease cannot be cured, but can be treated.

### Risk Factors

- Cigarette smoking
- Indoor and outdoor pollution
- Severe childhood breathing problems
- Heavy exposure to dust and chemicals at work

### Tests to Diagnose

- Pulmonary function studies (measures the airflow in and out of the lungs)
- Pulse oximetry (measures level of oxygen in blood)
- Arterial blood gas studies (measures amount of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the blood)

### Symptoms

- Shortness of breath
- Coughing and wheezing
- Tightness in chest
- Feeling weak or overly tired
- Increased mucus (spit)
- Problem sleeping

### Treatment

#### Medications

- Bronchodilators – help relax and open airways
- Corticosteroids – decrease inflammation and swelling in airways
- Antibiotics – help fight infection (finish all of the pills)
- Expectorants – help cough and remove mucous
- Oxygen – prescribed in some cases

If you cannot afford your medications, please contact the Licking Memorial Hospital (LMH) Prescription Assistance Program at (220) 564-1844.



**Licking Memorial  
Health Systems**

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**Smoking**

- Smoking makes COPD worse. Quitting is the best thing you can do to feel better.
- Pick a quit date and tell friends and family.
- LMH can help you quit with our smoking cessation program, “Quit for Your Health.” Ask your nurse for information or call (220) 564-QUIT.
- For more support and help, call the Ohio Tobacco Quit Hotline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW.

**Activity**

- Do daily exercises. At first, you only may be able to exercise a few minutes at a time. Keeping in shape helps prevent shortness of breath.
- Start pulmonary rehabilitation – this helps you build up your strength slowly and safely.
- Learn to conserve energy. Avoid bending and lifting. Plan your time and space activities out.

**Diet**

- Eat a well-balanced diet. Eating too much can make you short of breath. Not eating enough decreases your energy. If you get short of breath when eating, eat small meals more times a day.

**Breathing Exercises**

1. Pursed lip breathing – helps control shortness of breath.
  - a. Breathe in 2 counts – breathe out through puckered lips for 4 counts (like blowing out a candle).
2. Diaphragmatic breathing – gives you more room to breathe.
  - a. Breathe in for 2 counts and relax your stomach muscles. Breathe out through puckered lips for 4 counts and tighten your stomach muscles.

**Relax**

- Picture yourself in a favorite place.
- Slowly tense and relax each part of your body.
- Meditate.

**Prevent Lung Infections**

- Wash your hands often.
- Flu vaccine – Get a flu shot every year and stay out of crowds in the winter.
- Pneumonia vaccine – Ask your doctor about getting a pneumonia vaccine.

**When to Call the Doctor**

- More coughing, wheezing, or shortness of breath not helped by your medications
- Increase in mucus production and change in color of mucus
- Swelling in ankles or legs or sudden weight gain
- Confusion, unusual sleepiness, or unusual dizziness
- Loss of appetite
- Chills and fever over 101° F