



What is COPD?

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Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or COPD, refers to a group of diseases that cause blocked airflow and breathing problems. It includes:

- emphysema
- chronic bronchitis
- sometimes, asthma.

COPD is a leading cause of death, illness, and disability in the United States. In 2000, COPD caused:

- 119,000 deaths
- 726,000 hospitalizations
- 1.5 million hospital emergency departments visits
- 8 million clinic visits.

What causes COPD?

- Smoking
- Asthma
- Air pollution at home and work
- Genetic factors
- Respiratory infections

Who has COPD

In the United States, as many as 24 million Americans are affected. The COPD death rate for women is growing much faster than the rate for men. The death rate for women is 56.7 deaths per 100,000 women. For men, the rate is 82.6 deaths per 100,000 men.

Why women's COPD rates are so much higher than men's

These increases probably reflect the increase in smoking by women, relative to men, since the 1940s. A history of currently or formerly smoking is the risk factor most often linked to COPD. The increase in the number of women smoking over the past 50 years is mirrored in the increase in COPD rates among women.

How COPD can be prevented

Early detection of COPD might alter its course and progress. A simple test can be used to measure pulmonary function and detect COPD in current and former smokers aged 45 and over and anyone with respiratory problems. Avoiding tobacco smoke, home and workplace air pollutants, and respiratory infections are key to preventing the initial development of COPD.

How COPD is treated

- Careful and thorough evaluation by a physician.
- **Avoid tobacco smoking**
- Remove air pollutants from home or workplace.
- Coughing or wheezing can be treated with medication.
- Respiratory infections should be treated with antibiotics, if appropriate.
- Supplemental oxygen is used for those who need it

To learn more about COPD, visit these sites:

- [American Lung Association](#)
- [American Thoracic Society](#)
- Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease <http://www.goldcopd.com>
- [National Institutes of Health](#)
- [National Lung Health Education Program](#)

Source: CDC.gov June 15, 2009