Understanding COPD

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a progressive disease of the lungs and airways. It affects the body’s ability to use oxygen. It causes inflammation and narrowing of the airways making it hard to breathe. COPD includes emphysema (destruction of lung tissue and air sacs) and chronic bronchitis (inflammation and excess mucous production in the lungs). COPD can be managed through medication and lifestyle changes.

What causes COPD?

Many things increase the risk of COPD. By far, the #1 cause of COPD is smoking. Other less frequent causes include: asthma, airway infections early in life, family health history, and malnutrition. Some triggers include exposure to dust, air pollutants, chemicals, fumes and irritants.

What are the symptoms?

COPD develops slowly, taking many years before any symptoms are noticeable. Typically, COPD is diagnosed in middle-aged and older adults. It can be hard to tell apart from asthma. Common symptoms include:

- Shortness of breath while exercising
- Shortness of breath even when resting
- Morning coughing that produces thick mucus
- Coughing every day
- A chest infection lasting over two weeks
- Wheezing while breathing
- Fatigue, weight loss and restlessness

How is COPD diagnosed?

Usually by a special lung function test called “Spirometry,” but may also include analysis of a sputum sample, getting blood tests, or having a chest x-ray as ordered by your healthcare provider.

Can COPD be cured?

No. There is no cure for COPD. The good news is that COPD can be managed. Talk to your provider about treatments that can make you breathe better.

How do you manage COPD?

If you smoke, quit. Stay away from secondhand smoke, dust, pollutants, strong odors, and chemicals. Seek treatment right away for coughing, wheezing, and airway infections. Drink lots of water to keep secretions thin. Take your medicines as your provider tells you.

• Quit smoking
  - If you smoke, quitting is the most important thing you can do to manage COPD.
  - Ask your provider for ways and resources to help you quit smoking.
  - Ask for a referral to Facey’s Quit Smoking Program.

• Talk with your provider
  - Discuss your symptoms with your provider at every visit.
  - Report changes in your activity level.
  - Bring your medicines to every visit, including over the counter medicines.
  - Tell your provider if you are feeling sad or anxious about your COPD.
  - Work together to create goals to improve your care and overall health.

• Do your part...
  - See your healthcare provider regularly.
  - Call your provider if you feel your medicines do not seem to work.
  - Learn all you can about COPD.
  - Learn about the medicines you take, when you take them and why you take them.
  - Take those medicines as directed.
  - Keep appointments with your provider.
  - Ask your family & friends for support.
  - Follow an exercise program as directed.
  - Eat the right (high calorie, high nutrient) foods.
  - Pace yourself as you walk.
  - Break-up large tasks into smaller ones.
  - Save your energy for the most important things.
  - Ask about Facey’s Healthier Living Program.
  - Don’t adjust medicine (oxygen) without talking with your provider.

Take an active role in managing your COPD to help you feel better.
# Understanding COPD

## COPD Office Visit Checklist

Answer the following questions prior to your next medical visit. Then, be sure to talk with your healthcare provider about your answers. And note any changes you may have noticed since your last visit:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Are you a smoker?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Has your breathing been more difficult than usual?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Have you been coughing more than usual?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Has this coughing produced more mucus than usual?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Has your mucus been thicker than usual?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Has the color of your mucus been different than usual?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Have you been wheezing?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Have you been awakened by your breathing?</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>About how many hours have you been sleeping each night?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>How would you describe changes in your appetite?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Have you lost any weight?</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>What activities have you been doing regularly?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Are any activities harder for you because of your breathing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Overall, do you think your health is:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Did you use your breathing medicine today?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Have you needed to use your quick-relief (rescue) inhaled medicine more often?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bring all your medicines to your appointment with your healthcare provider. Talk to your provider about how you are feeling and how you can better manage your COPD. Don't let COPD get you down. COPD can be managed successfully.

**For information about classes that Facey offers, call toll free (866) 837-5605.**

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**NOTE:** The content provided is intended for educational purposes only. It is not to be considered medical advice. Please consult with your healthcare provider for additional information and/or appropriate care.

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