

My life with  
**COPD**

**English**



## What is COPD

COPD is short for Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease. “Chronic” means that you have to live with the disease the rest of your life. The development of the disease can be arrested but it will never disappear completely.

“Obstructive” means that the respiratory passages are constricted thus the air transport has to work harder than usually. The disease is progressive and you can have been sick for many years before the diagnosis COPD is made. A typical indication of COPD is breathlessness on exertion. The breathlessness occurs because the lung function is permanently impaired.



# How do I live with COPD

COPD is a chronic lung disease thus you have to learn to live with it. Fortunately, there are many things you can do to better cope with the disease and avoid further deterioration of the disease.

- **Stop smoking**

If you want to stop smoking, you can get help on nicotine replacement therapy courses. Avoid cigarette smoke, pollution, dust, perfume and other strong fragrances.

- **Daily exercise**

Many people with a lung disease limit their physical activities because they believe that it is dangerous to be breathless. On the contrary, it is good to use your body – also if you get short of breath. The musculature will become stronger and can tolerate more before it gets tired.

Thus you will have more energy and be able to perform more activities than previously. As an additional bonus, the training will increase the spirits and the feeling of well-being.

- **Eat healthy**

Make sure that you have a healthy and varied diet. Diet is an important factor when you suffer from COPD because the life span and quality of life are linked up with having the right weight and muscle mass. If you have COPD, you use extra energy on breathing thus you risk getting underweight. In this case you must eat a fat and rich diet with many small snacks. Talk to your doctor about it as it might be necessary to take protein drinks or other diet supplements in order to maintain your standard weight.

Overweight also inhibits your breathing. If that is the case, you must eat low-fat food and try to lose weight. If you are unsure whether you are overweight or underweight and how you must eat, talk to your doctor.

An easy way to thin the phlegm in the lungs is to drink a lot of water thus it is easier to cough up the phlegm. When you suffer from COPD, you risk being short of calcium thus you need to take a calcium and vitamin D supplement on a daily basis.

- **Get vaccinated against influenza**

Avoid intimate contact with persons who have respiratory tract infections such as a cold or influenza. See the doctor every autumn and get vaccinated against influenza as influenza is difficult to recover from when you suffer from COPD.

- **Take the medicine prescribed by your doctor**

Remember to take the medicine/inhalations prescribed by your doctor. It is especially important that you take the inhalations correct as an incorrect technique may imply that you do not benefit from the medicine. Make sure that you do it correct by showing your doctor or the pharmacy how you do it.



## What should I keep an eye on

COPD is a chronic disease that cannot be cured, but through treatment with medicine supported by lifestyle changes the symptoms can be improved. A chronic disease may for some people imply a life of anxiety and depression. It is important to take it seriously, talk to your doctor about it.

Cooperate with your doctor: It is important that you go to regular check-ups at your doctor's thus you can ensure a correct use of your medicine through a close cooperation and a good dialogue with your doctor.

You must also know the symptoms of impairment thus you contact the doctor if the amount of phlegm increases, changes colour, increased shortness of breath or fever.



## **Below are some simple respiratory exercises for COPD patients**

### **The 'whistle mouth' exercise**

An exercise you can use every time you get short of breath. It gives resistance to the air you exhale, increases the pressure in your respiratory passages and keeps them open.

- Breathe slowly through the lips as if you want to whistle and exhale evenly at the same time.



### **Breathe with the stomach**

A simple relaxation exercise that you can do several times a day. Relaxation increases your general well-being and gives you energy.

- Place your hand on the chest. This hand must not be moved when breathing.
- Place the other hand on the stomach. This hand must be moved when breathing.
- Take a deep breath and feel how your stomach puffs out.
- Exhale through the mouth with a "whistle mouth".
- Feel how your stomach returns to normal size.

### **Controlled coughing**

By coughing in a controlled way, you can cough up phlegm without getting breathless or damaging your respiratory passages:

- Take a slow, deep breath through the nose.
- Hold your breath for some second.
- Open the mouth a little and cough 2-3 short coughs.
- Relax and repeat.



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