



Neighborhood Health Partners

Managing Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

What is COPD?

COPD is a lung disease that, over time, makes it hard to breathe. Although serious, COPD can be managed with medical therapies and healthy lifestyle choices. Emphysema, chronic bronchitis, irreversible asthma and severe bronchiectasis are all types of COPD.

Warning Signs

- Constant coughing
- Shortness of breath
- High amount of sputum, phlegm or mucus
- Tightness of the chest
- Frequent wheezing

Diagnosis

COPD is diagnosed in several ways. Spirometry is a test that measures the amount and speed of air you blow out. Doctors also use your health history, chest X-rays and other exams to confirm the type of COPD.

Complications

Complications linked to uncontrolled COPD include the following:

- Heart disease
- Heart failure
- Increased risk of pulmonary infection

Tips to Help You Take Control

- Develop an action plan
- Stay current on flu and pneumonia vaccines
- Do not smoke
- Understand and take your COPD medicines and therapies as directed
- Exercise and eat right
- Conserve your energy
- Reduce stress
- Use oxygen therapy if your healthcare provider recommends it
- Control your breathing
- Tell your doctor and health coach if your symptoms get worse
- Manage acute flare-ups
- Use support from family and friends

If you feel breathless or have blood in your mucus, your COPD may be getting worse. Call your doctor or 911 right away!