Talking About COPD

Taking an active role in your health is important.
Talking with your healthcare professional is a great first step to learning about and coping with COPD.*

Before your appointment
- Make a list of all symptoms you have and any changes in your general health
- Jot down important personal details. Has a major life change happened since your last visit?
- Write down your medical history. Have you had recent surgery? Which medications are you taking?
- Consider bringing a relative or friend for support and to help you remember things

What to expect during your appointment
If your healthcare professional thinks you may have COPD, he or she may recommend a breathing test called spirometry (spy-rom-ih-tree).
- You may also be given other tests, like a chest x-ray or a blood test
- You will have the chance to ask your healthcare professional your questions
- You can talk to him or her about how to quit smoking
- Your healthcare professional may explain things that can help you breathe better, like taking your medications or doing breathing exercises

After your appointment
- Stop smoking
- Take your medicine as directed by your healthcare professional
- See your healthcare professional regularly
- Exercise regularly and keep your body strong. Eat healthy foods
- If your breathing gets worse, go to your doctor or to the hospital immediately

Here are some organizations that can provide you with more information about COPD:

- COPD Foundation
  www.copdfoundation.org
- National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI)
  1-301-592-8573
  www.nhlbi.nih.gov
- National Emphysema Foundation
  1-203-866-5000
  www.emphysemafoundation.org
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
  1-800-232-4636
  www.cdc.gov
- Pulmonary Education and Research Foundation
  www.perf2ndwind.org

Your COPD medicines
Talk to your healthcare professional about what medications may be right for you. He or she may give you:
- A "rescue" medication to help you breathe better whenever you have difficulty breathing or when your breathing suddenly becomes worse
- A maintenance medicine that you need to take every day
- A steroid (stare-oyd) or an antibiotic (an-tie-by-ah-tik) if you have a flare-up

Ask your healthcare professional:
How do I take my medication?
When and how often should I take my medication?

* COPD stands for chronic (kron-ick) obstructive (ob-struck-tiv) pulmonary (pull-muh-nair-ee) disease, including chronic bronchitis (bronk-eye-tis), emphysema (em-fuh-zee-muh), or both.

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