



What is COPD and can I get it from smoking?

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a lung disease that makes it hard for a person to breathe. COPD is most associated with emphysema and chronic bronchitis.

Smoking is the leading cause of COPD, so the best way to prevent it is to never start smoking. Once you get COPD, it cannot be cured, only managed. COPD symptoms include:

- Shortness of breath
- Coughing
- Mucus/phlegm
- Fatigue

In order for COPD to be properly diagnosed, a health care provider should review your symptoms, smoking history, and administer a breathing test called spirometry.

How harmful is COPD?

- COPD is the third leading cause of death in the U.S.
- 100,000 of the more than 120,000 COPD deaths each year are smoking related—killing men and women in almost equal number.
- Approximately 15 million people in the U.S. have been diagnosed with COPD while millions more are thought to be living with it.

How will my COPD be affected if I quit smoking?

There is no cure for COPD. Once you are diagnosed with COPD, you will need to manage it. While there are many COPD medications that can help, by far the best treatment is to quit smoking. By quitting smoking you will:

- Reduce your risk of dying from COPD and other diseases
- Decrease COPD symptoms or flare ups
- Improve your lung function
- Slow the rate of lung tissue loss

I want to quit using tobacco—how do I get started?

- Talk to your VA health care provider about cessation medications and counseling to treat your tobacco use.
- Call VA's tobacco quitline at **1-855-QUIT-VET** (1-855-784-8838) Monday–Friday. Available in English & Spanish.
- Sign up for VA's SmokefreeVET text messaging program—text the word **VET** to **47848** (manda **VETesp** al **47848** para ayuda en español) or visit [smokefree.gov/VET](https://www.smokefree.gov/VET).

