

Understanding COPD

What is COPD?

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a disease that damages the lungs, making it difficult to breathe over time. It includes other chronic lung diseases like emphysema and chronic bronchitis.

The main symptom of COPD is **breathlessness**. Some people with COPD also experience **tiredness and chronic cough with or without mucus (phlegm)**. Let's break down this complicated name into smaller pieces:

C Chronic

COPD is not a disease that can be cured, but it can be successfully managed and treated. The symptoms of COPD often take years to develop but with lifestyle changes and treatments, your quality of life can greatly improve and allow you to stay active.

O Obstructive

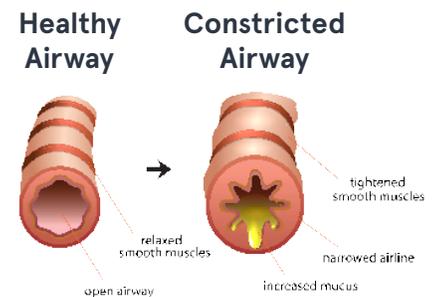
In COPD, the airflow through your lungs is blocked (obstructed). Less air is flowing in and out which can be caused by swelling and extra mucus in the tubes inside your lungs.

P Pulmonary

Pulmonary means lung and is where this disease is located. When you breathe air in, it travels through your windpipe and into the airways in your lungs, called bronchial tubes. They look like the branches of a tree, with larger tubes leading to smaller ones. Each airway "branch" ends with alveoli, which are tiny air sacs where oxygen moves into the bloodstream. The alveoli can be thought of as the leaves on a tree. Chronic bronchitis affects the bronchi (the tree branches) while emphysema affects the alveoli (the leaves on the tree).

D Disease

COPD is a progressive disease which means the damage in your lungs gets worse over time and symptoms usually become more severe. But with the right treatment, your symptoms can be managed, and the progression of the disease can be slowed.



Village Medical is proud to partner with



Understanding COPD

What are the symptoms of COPD?

The symptoms of COPD can be different for each person. Symptoms can also vary from day to day, with some days being worse than others. Common symptoms of COPD include:

- Shortness of breath, especially while doing everyday activities
- A frequent cough with or without mucus
- Wheezing (a whistling sound when you breathe in or out)
- Chest tightness

Some of these symptoms are like those related to other conditions, such as heart problems, obesity, asthma, and allergies. It is important to tell your doctor if you are experiencing any of these symptoms.

Many people with COPD also have additional chronic diseases. These are called comorbidities, which means there is more than one disease or condition within your body at the same time. This term is important because it helps doctors and advanced practice providers (APPs)* understand and explain how different conditions might affect your physical and mental health, both together and separately. Talk to your primary care provider if you have other symptoms even if you think they are not related to your COPD.



There are many ways to treat and manage your COPD. Your Village Medical care team will help you figure out which medications, devices and lifestyle changes are right for you. Be sure to speak with your Village Medical team at the first sign of COPD symptoms so they can be managed to help improve your quality of life and overall health.

Village Medical is proud to partner with



*An advanced practice provider is defined as a nurse practitioner or physician assistant.