

# COPD



## What is COPD?

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a lung disease characterized by chronic obstruction of lung airflow that interferes with normal breathing and is not fully reversible. Symptoms include breathing difficulty, cough, mucus production, and wheezing. It's caused by long-term exposure to irritating gases or particulate matter, most often from cigarette smoke. COPD symptoms often do not appear until significant lung damage has occurred, and they usually worsen over time, particularly if smoking exposure continues. People with COPD are at increased risk of developing heart disease, lung cancer and a variety of other conditions.

## Symptoms

- Shortness of Breath, especially during physical activities
- Wheezing
- Chest Tightness
- Chronic Cough that may produce mucus
- Blueness of the lips or fingernail beds (cyanosis)
- Frequent Respiratory Infections
- Swelling in ankles or feet
- Lack of Energy

## Management

- Sit up and lean forward, such as over a table, or lean forward with hands on knees
- Elevate the head of the bed
- Use the pursed lip breathing technique
- Sit near a window with a breeze or have a fan blow gently across your face.
- Pace your activities

## Treatment

- Bronchodilators: \_\_\_\_\_
- Oral Steroids: \_\_\_\_\_
- Anxiolytics: \_\_\_\_\_
- Opioids: \_\_\_\_\_
- Oxygen: \_\_\_\_\_

If you need help with your symptoms, call VNA 24hrs a day:

# 214-689-0000

## What should I communicate to the hospice/palliative care team?

- Worsening shortness of breath that does not respond to treatment
- Increased anxiety/restlessness
- Abdominal movement when breathing
- Depression

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