

Some useful resources

Canadian Lung Association:

- Hotline: 1-866-717-COPD (6762)
- Website : <https://www.lung.ca/copd>

Respiplus : Living well with COPD – A plan of action for life

- Website with free registration at : <https://www.livingwellwithcopd.com/en/home.htm>

Government of Nunavut, Department of Health, Tobacco Reduction Program (s.d.). Tobacco has no place here.

- Quit Line : 1-866-368-7848
- Website : <https://nuquits.gov.nu.ca/>



References

1. Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease (2021). Global strategy for the diagnosis, management, and prevention of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (2022 Report). https://goldcopd.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/GOLD-REPORT-2022-v1.1-22Nov2021_WMV.pdf
2. Canadian Lung Association (2016). Lung Health: How to use your inhaler. BREATHE the lung association. <https://www.lung.ca/lung-health/get-help/how-use-your-inhaler>
3. Canadian Lung Association (2019). COPD: Signs and Symptoms. BREATHE the lung association. <https://www.lung.ca/lung-health/lung-disease/copd/symptoms>
4. GlaxoSmithKline Services Unlimited (2018). How is your COPD? Take the CAT (COPD Assessment Test™) questionnaire to assess your COPD. CAT (COPD Assessment test). <https://www.catestonline.org/patient-site-test-page-english.html>

COPD

(Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease)

Definition of COPD

COPD is a disease affecting the lungs. It's not contagious. It mainly affects people aged 40 and over. It is not possible to cure this disease. However, we can prevent it. In addition, symptoms can be relieved, and the progression of the disease can be prevented.

COPD symptoms

- Shortness of breath on exertion and at rest
- Cough that does not go away
- Lung secretions/sputum
- Having respiratory infections more often and lasting longer than those around you.
- Other: fatigue, headaches, sleep disturbances

Consequences of COPD

Each acute attack of COPD is associated with permanent negative consequences:

- worsening of symptoms
- disease progression
- increased risk of death
- increased costs related to the intensification of treatments.

How to improve your inhalation technique?

Each pump has its own peculiarities. If you wish to revise your inhalation technique, do not hesitate to contact your pharmacist. The method explained below applies to metered-dose inhalators (MDI) with an aerochamber.

- 1) Remove the protective caps from the pump and the aerochamber.
- 2) Shake the pump up and down 3 to 4 times.
- 3) Insert the pump nozzle into the aerochamber.
- 4) Exhale next to the device. Do not force the expiration to limit cough and increase respiratory difficulties.
- 5) Place the aerochamber in your mouth. Firmly close the lips around the mouthpiece of it. Be careful not to block it with your teeth.
- 6) Press the pump cartridge once.
- 7) Breathe normally (inhale, then exhale) 3 to 4 times in the aerochamber. If you hear the whistle, it's a sign that you're breathing too hard or too fast.





What can you do besides taking your medication ?

- Promote a smoke-free environment
- Exercise daily or enroll in a respiratory rehabilitation program
- Prioritize a balanced and complete diet
- Use breathing and energy conservation techniques
- Go to your medical appointments to allow follow-up of the disease and the adjustment of medication if necessary

Talk to your medical team (doctor, respiratory therapist, nutritionist, nurse, pharmacist) for more information.



Could you have COPD?

Smokers or ex-smokers over the age of 40 are at greater risk of developing COPD. The same is true if you have a family member who has COPD.

If you want to check if you have symptoms of COPD, answer the following questions:

- 1) Do you cough regularly?
- 2) Do you expectorate or spit up often?
- 3) Are you short of breath, even slightly, when doing simple tasks?
- 4) Is your breathing wheezing at night or on exertion?
- 5) Do you catch colds more often or that last longer than the people around you?

If you answered yes to any of the 5 questions above, you might have COPD. Talk to your doctor.



How to assess the severity of your COPD?

“For each item below, place a mark (X) in the box that best describes you currently. Be sure to only select one response for each question” (GSK, 2009).

Example: I am very happy 0 1 2 3 4 5 I am very sad

	0	1	2	3	4	5		SCORE
I never cough	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I cough all the time	<input type="text"/>
I have no phlegm (mucus) in my chest at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	My chest is completely full of phlegm (mucus)	<input type="text"/>
My chest does not feel tight at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	My chest feels very tight	<input type="text"/>
When I walk up a hill or one flight of stairs I am not breathless	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	When I walk up a hill or one flight of stairs I am very breathless	<input type="text"/>
I am not limited doing any activities at home	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I am very limited doing activities at home	<input type="text"/>
I am confident leaving my home despite my lung condition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I am not at all confident leaving my home because of my lung condition	<input type="text"/>
I sleep soundly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I don't sleep soundly because of my lung condition	<input type="text"/>
I have lots of energy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I have no energy at all	<input type="text"/>
							TOTAL SCORE	<input type="text"/>

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If your total score is 10 points or more, talk to your doctor.

Smoking Cessation

This is the most crucial step you can take to improve your symptoms and decrease the risk of disease flare-ups. This is also the only measure that can slow the progression of the disease. In addition, several treatments are available to help you quit. Ask your pharmacist or public health or call the Nunavut quit line at 1-866-368-7848 or go to nuquits.gov.nu.ca for more information.



Vaccination

The annual flu vaccine and the vaccines against pneumonia are highly recommended to prevent COPD flare-ups caused by viruses or bacteria.



Drug treatments

There are several medication options for COPD. The most frequently used are bronchodilators. These drugs relieve shortness of breath. They can be combined with anti-inflammatories when the goal is to prevent COPD attacks and further reduce shortness of breath. Additionally, as mentioned above, antibiotics can also be used. Finally, oxygen can also be prescribed if significant fatigue is caused by low oxygen levels.

Some of these medications are to be taken regularly and others only as needed.

The majority of medications used in COPD are inhalators. Drugs to swallow still are an option. However, pumps are more frequently used because they are associated with fewer side effects than treatments by mouth. Also, inhalers are often more effective than oral treatments.

Every medication carries risks of side effects. If you have any questions about your medicine, do not hesitate to discuss them with your pharmacist.

How to recognize a COPD attack?



A COPD attack is associated with a sudden increase in symptoms (cough, shortness of breath, the volume of secretions and/or coloured secretions). In addition, the whole thing must last 2 days or more.

The worsening of COPD symptoms can have several causes (bacteria, virus, environmental, unknown).

In some cases of COPD exacerbation, if an infection caused by bacteria is suspected, your doctor may prescribe an antibiotic.

A worsening of your COPD is probably caused by bacteria if you have had these symptoms for at least 2 days:

- Presence of unusual coloured secretions AND
- Increase in your shortness of breath OR
- Increase in the volume of your secretions

Note that it is possible to develop an action plan with your doctor so that you can manage your COPD exacerbations on your own. If this interests you, talk to your doctor.

In all cases, whether you have or not an action plan, you can always count on your pharmacist to answer your questions about COPD.