

What is Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)?

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a chronic lung disease that makes it harder to breathe over time.

There are two types of COPD:

Chronic Bronchitis is inflammation of the lining of the airways that carry air to and from the air sacs of the lungs. Symptoms can include daily cough and mucus (phlegm) production.

Emphysema occurs when there is damage to the smallest air passages of the lungs from exposure to cigarette smoke and other irritants.

How I Can Live Better with COPD:

- Stop smoking
- Take my medications
- Check oxygen level as directed
- Keep my airway clear
- Ensure my home is free of mold
- Get my pneumonia and flu vaccines
- Practice pursed lip breathing
- Use my inhaler as directed
- Walk daily, gradually increasing time and/or distance

Symptoms of a COPD Flare:

- Increased cough
- Increased shortness of breath
- Increased heart rate
- Increased mucus production/chest congestion
- Wheezing
- Fever
- Confusion or excessive sleepiness
- Swelling in feet or ankles
- Change in mucus color

It is important that you or a loved one call your provider at the earliest sign of a COPD flare. Your provider will help you make decisions on the best course of action for you. This may include new medicines.

NHRMC Programs and Support Services:

- **Stopping Smoking:** NHRMC offers classes. Call 910.264.9200 for more information.
- **COPD Navigation:** If you are admitted with COPD to NHRMC, a COPD Navigator may provide you with one-on-one education about this disease and lend support to help you stay as healthy as possible. Call 910.264.9200 for more information.
- **Pulmonary Rehabilitation:** This purpose of this program is to improve the quality of life for patients with breathing problems, including COPD. For more information on the program, call 910.662.9901 or talk to your provider about a referral.
- **NHRMC Physician Group - Coastal Pulmonary Medicine** offers COPD patients medical support including:
 - Inpatient care at NHRMC for critically ill patients
 - Nine dedicated providers seeing patients five days a week
- **Transitional Disease Management Support:** Patients with COPD discharging from NHRMC who are at high risk for readmission may receive follow-up phone calls from an NHRMC nurse and potentially a home visit from a Community Paramedic to help make a smooth transition back to living in your home. Call 910.667.7275 to reach the Transitional Disease Management team.
- **NHRMC Expresscare** is available for any urgent medical needs. Learn more at nhrmc.org/services/expresscare.
- **VitaLine** provides free, confidential access to nonurgent health information from experienced registered nurses and other professionally trained staff who can help connect you to the care you need. Call 888-815-5188 to reach the VitaLine team, who will follow up with you at their earliest convenience.

Additional References and Resources:

- More information on quitting tobacco can also be found at
 - Smokefree.gov
 - quitnow.net
 - quitlinenc.com
 - 1.800.QUITNOW

Better Breathing Tip: It's normal to hold your shoulders tense and high. Before starting any breathing technique, take a minute to lower your shoulders, close your eyes and relax.