Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

Respiratory Services
Cobequid Community Health Centre

Phone: 902-869-6140
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What is COPD?
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a progressive (gets worse over time) lung disorder most commonly caused by smoking. COPD can be chronic bronchitis, emphysema, or a combination of both.

Who is at risk of developing COPD?
People 40 years of age or older who smoke or used to smoke are most at risk of developing COPD.

Cigarette smoke is the main pollutant that can damage your lungs and is the leading cause of COPD. Not all people who smoke (or have smoked in the past) notice problems with their breathing right away. It usually takes years to develop symptoms of COPD.

Chronic bronchitis is inflammation of the airways (breathing passages) in the lungs that causes them to become swollen with thick, sticky mucus. The airways can become blocked and this may prevent the lungs from emptying fully.
Emphysema is damage to the alveoli (small air sacs in the lungs) which prevents the lungs from emptying fully. This can also make it hard to get oxygen into your body.

Signs and symptoms of COPD include:
› sputum (mucus) on most days
› frequent chest infections
› wheezing
› shortness of breath when exercising or doing daily activities

How is COPD diagnosed?
COPD is diagnosed by taking your history and doing a physical exam along with a simple breathing test called spirometry.

Your family health care provider or Respirologist can order spirometry.
How is COPD be managed?

Managing COPD can include:

- **Smoking cessation.** Smoking Cessation programs are available throughout Nova Scotia Health Authority. See www.nshealth.ca/content/stop-smoking-services for more info.

- **Education.** Education is available at Respiratory Services.

- **Medications**, including inhalers and oral (taken by mouth) medications.

- **Vaccinations**, including a flu vaccine every year and the pneumococcal vaccine.

- **Staying physically active.**

- **Pulmonary rehabilitation** (exercises).

Pulmonary rehabilitation is available at the Cobequid Community Health Centre. Please see the *Pulmonary Rehabilitation Program* patient pamphlet for more information or call Respiratory Services.
Goals of COPD education
› prevent disease progression (e.g., smoking cessation)
› prevent or relieve shortness of breath
› improve ability to exercise
› decrease the number of flare-ups
› improve quality of life
› reduce time spent in hospital

How do I get started?
• Ask your family health care provider to complete the referral form and mail or fax it to Respiratory Services (see front page). We will contact you with an appointment time.
• You can also call Respiratory Services and make an appointment yourself.
• If you would like more information about COPD education, please call the Respiratory Educator at 902-869-6140.
To learn more about COPD, visit www.livingwellwithCOPD.com

Looking for more health information?
Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here:
http://library.nshealth.ca/PatientGuides
Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources. For more information, go to http://library.novascotia.ca
Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit https://811.novascotia.ca
Learn about other programs and services in your community:
Call 211 or visit http://ns.211.ca

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www.nshealth.ca

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