

FACT SHEET COPD AND LUNG CANCER

It is the mission of Compassionate Care Home Health Services, Inc. to promote recovery and independence to those in need by providing the highest quality of compassionate care for each client in the comfort of their own home. We recognize the value of coordinating services with other community organizations in order to most effectively meet a client's individual care needs.

COPD stands for Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease – a progressive disease that makes it hard to breathe. Progressive means the disease gets worse over time. In fact, over time clients with COPD will have difficulty doing even basic activities like walking, cooking, or showering. COPD can cause coughing up large amounts of mucus, wheezing, shortness of breath and chest tightness.

COPD includes two main conditions (most with COPD have both):

- Emphysema
- Chronic bronchitis

Lung cancer develops when something (most often smoking) damages the genetic code of normal cells. These damaged cells reproduce too rapidly, forming clumps of cells called tumors. Tumors steal nutrition and energy from the rest of the body. They can grow large enough to block vital functions and they can spread to other parts of the body.

Cigarette smoking is the leading cause of both COPD and Lung Cancer, but long-term exposure to other lung irritants can also contribute to these conditions. These include air pollution, chemical fumes, and dust and asbestos. COPD and Lung Cancer are not contagious however, and cannot be passed from person to person.

Our airways are shaped like upside-down trees with many branches. At the end of each branch is a tiny air sac, called an alveolus. These airways and air sacs are elastic. When we breathe in, each air sac fills up like a tiny balloon. When we breathe out, the air sac deflates and the air goes out.

In COPD, less air flows in and out because:

- The airways and air sacs lose their elasticity
- The walls between many of the sacs are destroyed
- The walls of the airways become thick and swollen
- The airways make more mucus than usual, clogging air flow

COPD is a major cause of disability and the fourth leading cause of death in the U.S. More than 12 million Americans are currently diagnosed, and the National Institute of Health estimates an additional 12 million have the disease but don't know it yet.

In lung cancer, a charred, blackened, gunky substance develops in the lungs and wherever cigarette smoke travels.

Symptoms include:

- An ongoing cough or a cough that produces large amounts of mucus (sometimes called a 'smoker's cough')
- Shortness of breath, especially with physical activity
- Wheezing (a whistling or squeaky sound when you breathe)
- Chest tightness

COPD AND LUNG CANCER CONTINUED...

As COPD and Lung Cancer progress you may become more prone to frequent colds and flu. You may also develop swelling in the feet and ankles and a bluish tone to your lips due to the low oxygen levels in your blood.

When COPD or Lung Cancer get too severe, the patient may need to be hospitalized for treatment:

- If you're having a hard time catching your breath or talking
- Your lips or fingernails turn blue or gray
- You're not mentally alert
- Your heartbeat is very fast

COPD has no cure yet, but doctors will work with you as you implement lifestyle changes and follow treatment plans to help you feel better, stay more active, and slow the progress of the disease.

The most important thing you can do to prevent COPD and Lung Cancer is not smoke. The most important thing you can do to treat COPD and Lung Cancer is not smoke. It is also important to avoid other lung irritants if you have COPD or Lung Cancer – This includes second hand smoke and air pollution.

Within 20 minutes of smoking that last cigarette, the body begins a series of changes that continues for years. In fact, just three months after your last cigarette, your circulation improves and your lung function increases.

Talk to your doctor if you have symptoms of COPD or Lung Cancer; or if you have any questions.



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It is not the intention of Compassionate Care Home Health Services, Inc. to provide specific medical advice, but rather to provide information to better understand your health. Specific medical advice will not be provided, and Compassionate Care HHS urges you to consult with a qualified physician for diagnosis and for answers to your personal questions.