

Smoking and COPD

WATCH THE VIDEO ONLINE!

www.healthjourneysupport.com/respiratory/smoking-copd

Smoking damages two main parts of your lungs: your airways, also called bronchial tubes, and small air sacs called alveoli.

With each breath, air travels down your windpipe, called the trachea, and enters your lungs through your bronchial tubes. Air then moves into thousands of tiny alveoli, where oxygen from the air moves into your bloodstream and the waste product carbon dioxide moves out of your bloodstream.

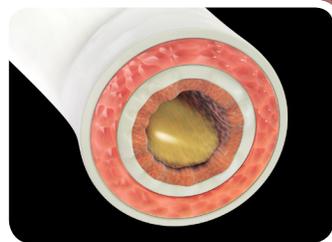
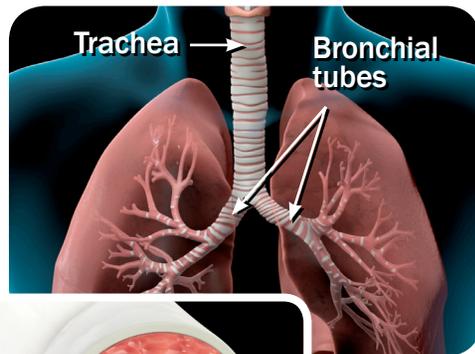
Tiny hair-like projections, called cilia, line your bronchial tubes and sweep harmful substances out of your lungs.

Cigarette smoke irritates the lining of your bronchial tubes, causing them to swell and make mucus.

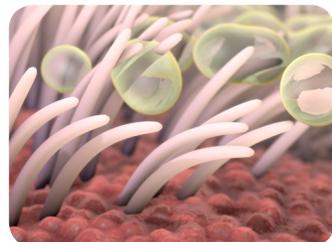
Cigarette smoke also slows the movement of your cilia, causing mucus to stay in your lungs.

While you are sleeping, some of the cilia recover and start pushing more pollutants and mucus out of your lungs.

When you wake up, your body attempts to expel this material by coughing repeatedly, a condition known as smoker's cough.



Bronchial tube with mucus



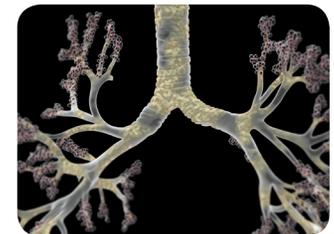
Cilia pushing mucus out

Over time, chronic bronchitis develops as your cilia stop working, your airways become affected, and breathing becomes difficult. Your lungs are now more vulnerable to further disease.

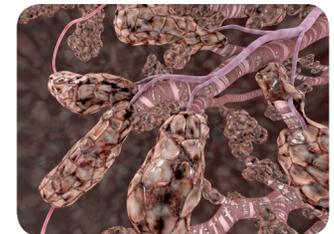
Cigarette smoke also damages your alveoli, making it harder for oxygen and carbon dioxide to exchange with your blood.

Over time, you may develop emphysema, a condition in which you may become short of breath and may need to wear an oxygen tube under your nose.

Chronic bronchitis and emphysema are collectively called **chronic obstructive pulmonary disease**, or COPD. COPD is a gradual loss of the ability to breathe, for which there is no cure.



Chronic bronchitis



Emphysema

Preventing COPD

- Never smoke
- Stop smoking
- Limit exposure to chemicals, fumes, and dust

Quitting Smoking

Why to Quit Smoking

Smoking damages the airways and air sacs that make up your lungs and leads to smoker's cough, chronic bronchitis, and emphysema. Chronic bronchitis and emphysema make up chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

Smoking also damages your body's blood vessels and cells. Cigarette smoking can cause cancer, stroke, and heart attack, and may make other health problems worse.

Others around you who are exposed to cigarette smoke can develop colds, infections, and more serious health problems.

Quitting smoking is the most important step to take to prevent COPD and other major health problems.

How to Quit Smoking

- **First, try not to smoke any cigarettes – not even one occasionally.** Every time you smoke, you are damaging your body. Try stopping completely, or going “cold turkey”; or gradually reduce the number of cigarettes you smoke, until you can stop.
- **Throw away all of your cigarettes and lighters.** It is easier to quit if you do not have these things lying around.
- **Think about the reasons why you smoke.** How often do you “light up”? Are there specific times of the day or events that trigger a cigarette craving?
- **Identify the reasons why you want to quit smoking.** Write down your reasons and keep copies in places where you normally keep your cigarettes. Commit to meeting your goals.

- **Tell your family, friends, and coworkers that you are quitting smoking.** Ask them to help you by not smoking around you.
- **Be aware of nicotine withdrawal symptoms and have a plan for dealing with them.** Nicotine patches and gum, and other smoking cessation therapies, can help with cigarette cravings.
- **Find a “quit buddy” who can quit smoking with you.** Having their support and staying accountable to one another may make the process easier.
- **Ask for help when you need it.** Talk to your health care providers and explore online resources for tips and information to help you quit.

Managing Nicotine Withdrawal and Cravings

While you are quitting smoking and for a few days after you quit, you may experience nicotine withdrawal symptoms and strong cravings for cigarettes.

Let your family and friends know about the symptoms of nicotine withdrawal so that they can understand changes in your mood.

Common Symptoms of Nicotine Withdrawal

- Dizziness
- Restlessness
- Irritability
- Headaches
- Hunger
- Anxiety or nervousness
- Frustration
- Anger
- Trouble sleeping

Ways to Manage Cravings

To help you control your cigarette cravings and get through these feelings, there are several things you can do:

- **Keep a craving journal.** Make a note of the times you want to smoke. Describe your feelings at these times so you can better understand your cigarette craving triggers.
- **Distract yourself.** Talk to a friend, read, or listen to music to get through times when you really want to smoke.
- **Stay active, stay busy.** Exercise, go for walks, and keep your hands occupied so you are sidetracked from the urge to smoke.
- **Find an oral replacement for your cigarette.** Chew gum, eat some fruit, or pop a mint into your mouth whenever you crave a cigarette.
- **Avoid places and events where others are smoking.** Go out to places where smoking indoors is prohibited so that it is more of a hassle to have a cigarette.
- **Drink plenty of water.** Water helps your body flush out the cigarette toxins out and helps you get through cravings.
- **Get help.** Talk to a therapist or counselor, or find self-help resources on your own.
- **Use smoking cessation therapies.** There are several therapeutic choices for dealing with withdrawal symptoms and cravings while quitting smoking.

Therapies to Help You Quit

You and your health care provider should discuss if smoking cessation therapies are right for you as you quit.

Nicotine Replacement Therapy

Because the nicotine in cigarettes is addictive, receiving nicotine without smoking a cigarette provides some relief of withdrawal symptoms.

Nicotine patches and nicotine gum are two examples of nicotine replacement therapy.

Non-Nicotine Therapy

These types of therapies reduce the urge to smoke and lessen nicotine withdrawal symptoms without providing nicotine to your body.

The information in this handout has been created and peer reviewed by graduate-level medical illustrators, followed by reviews from medical subject experts, either physicians or PhDs on the Nucleus Medical Review Board, to ensure medical accuracy and audience level appropriateness.

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