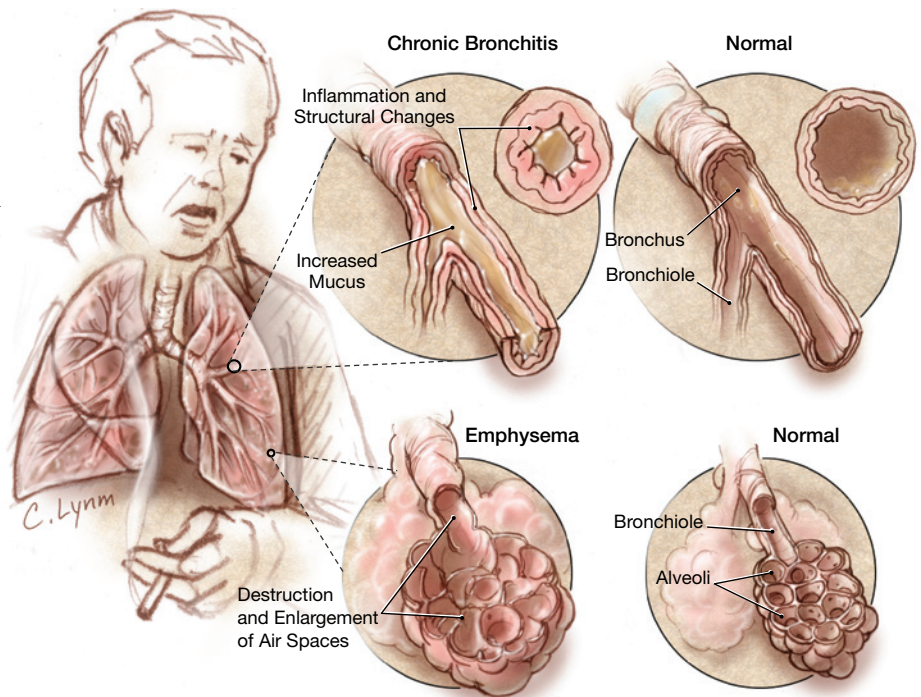


Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a term used to describe 2 related lung diseases: chronic bronchitis and emphysema.

Chronic bronchitis is inflammation and eventual scarring of the **bronchi** (airway tubes). **Emphysema** is enlargement and destruction of the **alveoli** (air sacs) within the lungs. Many persons with COPD have both of these conditions.

Persons with COPD have difficulty breathing because they develop smaller air passageways and have partially destroyed alveoli. The air passageways also become clogged with **mucus**, a slimy substance. Smoking cigarettes is the most important risk factor and cause of COPD. About 80% to 90% of COPD cases are caused by smoking, and a smoker is 10 times more likely than a nonsmoker to die of COPD. The November 5, 2003, issue of *JAMA* includes an article about treatments for COPD.



SYMPTOMS OF COPD

- Chronic cough
- Increased **sputum** (mucus coughed from the airways)
- Shortness of breath
- Limitation of physical activity

TREATMENTS FOR COPD

- Stopping smoking—extremely important to prevent worsening of the disease
- Bronchodilators—medications, often taken by an inhaler, that help open air passageways in the lungs
- Corticosteroids—medications taken by inhaler to counteract inflammation in the air passages and lungs
- Oxygen—can help patients with COPD who have a hard time getting enough oxygen; often stored in a portable tank
- Antibiotics—can be helpful for fighting bacterial infections that make symptoms of COPD worse

Sources: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute; American Lung Association; American Heart Association

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute
(301) 592-8573
www.nhlbi.nih.gov
- American Lung Association
800/LUNG-USA (800/586-4872)
www.lungusa.org

INFORM YOURSELF

To find this and other JAMA Patient Pages, go to the Patient Page link on JAMA's Web site at www.jama.com. A Patient Page on quitting smoking was published in the July 24/31, 2002, issue; and one on lung disease was published in the April 12, 2000, issue.

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