



# NORTH TEXAS ALLERGY & ASTHMA ASSOCIATES

## PREBYTERIAN OFFICE

Professional Building 2  
8220 Walnut Hill Lane, Suite 101  
Dallas, TX 75231  
Tel: (214) 369-1901  
Fax: (214) 369-1905  
Web: [www.texasallergyonline.com](http://www.texasallergyonline.com)

## BAYLOR OFFICE

Medical Pavilion 1  
4708 Alliance Blvd, Suite 610  
Plano, TX 75093  
Tel: (972) 596-4383  
Fax: (972) 596-4325

## CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISORDER (COPD)

### What is chronic obstructive pulmonary disease?

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is permanent obstruction of airflow from the lungs. This disease causes loss of lung function.

### How does it occur?

COPD generally results from chronic bronchitis and pulmonary emphysema, often caused by smoking. The disease usually develops over time and occurs most often in people over age 45 that smoke or live where air pollution is a problem.

### What are the symptoms?

COPD usually has symptoms of chronic bronchitis and/or emphysema. Symptoms of chronic bronchitis include chronic coughing, production of thick sputum, wheezing, shortness of breath, and/or frequent lung infections. Symptoms of emphysema include difficulty breathing, especially with exertion, cough (often dry), weight loss from difficulty breathing, and/or rapid breathing with advanced disease.

### How is it treated?

The doctor may prescribe medication such as:

- Bronchodilator treatment uses medication to relax the muscles in the bronchial tubes to allow air to flow. The most common inhaled bronchodilators used in COPD belong to the "anti-cholinergic" class of medicines
- "Sympathomimetics" are another class of bronchodilators, and come in short-acting or long-acting forms. These may provide benefit when anti-cholinergic drugs alone are not enough. Most often, bronchodilators are taken in the inhaled form. In advanced cases, oral bronchodilators may be prescribed. Inhaled bronchodilators may come in the form of metered-dose inhalers (pumps) or nebulizers. A nebulizer is a device that administers the medicine in the form of an aerosol
- Corticosteroid medications may also be used, especially when there is an episode of acute worsening
- Antibiotics are often given when there is an acute worsening that appears to be due to an infection such as bronchitis or pneumonia
- In special cases, lung transplantation or other kinds of surgery may be recommended if COPD is extremely severe

The following may be recommended to improve your symptoms:

- Exercise, such as walking or riding a stationary bicycle three or four times a day for 5 to 15 minutes
- Breathing exercises to help control the abnormal breathing associated with COPD
- Using a humidifier to increase air moisture at home (careful if you are allergic to mold)
- Changing your work environment to reduce exposure to irritants
- Drinking at least eight glasses of fluid a day
- If secretions are difficult to cough up, the doctor may have a nurse or family member help clear your bronchial tubes using chest percussion (striking a part of your chest with short, sharp blows) or postural drainage (helping you assume a posture that helps drain secretions from the lungs)

### How long will the effects last?

COPD cannot be cured.

### How can I prevent chronic obstructive pulmonary disease from worsening?

To help prevent COPD from worsening stop smoking and avoid irritants such as smoke, air pollution, and extreme variations in temperature and humidity. Also consider lifestyle changes such as changing jobs or moving to a less polluted climate or lower altitude.