

# HEALTH AWARENESS



A COUNTY HEALTH  
POOL PUBLICATION

November 2022

## COPD

# NOVEMBER IS NATIONAL COPD AWARENESS MONTH



**C**hronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), which includes chronic bronchitis and emphysema, is a chronic disease that causes inflammation in the lungs and obstructs airflow. According to the American Lung Association, the disease is the third leading cause of death in the United States and affects approximately 11 million Americans. COPD is a progressive disease that worsens over time. While there is no cure for COPD, the disease can be prevented and treated.

### SYMPTOMS

COPD symptoms may not appear until the disease is fairly advanced. One of the earliest symptoms is shortness of breath. Other common symptoms are a persistent cough, coughing up phlegm, wheezing, blue lips or fingernails, tightness in the chest, and chronic fatigue. As the disease progresses, it damages the airways in your lungs, making it harder for your body to get enough oxygen.

### DIAGNOSIS

The onset of the disease is gradual and usually diagnosed in people over 40. Smoking is the leading cause of COPD, although chronic exposure to fumes, pollution, or dust can also lead to the disease.

If your doctor suspects COPD, they may test your lung function using spirometry to test how much air you can breathe in and out. A chest x-ray or a chest CT scan may also be used to provide images of the lungs and airways.

Blood tests can be used as a diagnostic tool to measure blood oxygen and carbon dioxide levels or to test for the Alpha-1 Antitrypsin protein (AAT), which helps protect from lung diseases. Although rare, some people have a genetic mutation that causes their bodies not to manufacture enough AAT. These people are more likely to get lung diseases at an earlier age. Let your doctor know if you have a family history of COPD.

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## TREATMENT

There is no cure for COPD, but symptoms can be treated. The goal of treatment is to help you breathe better so you can return to your normal activities. Your doctor may prescribe either a short- or long-term bronchodilator. These medicines are administered with an inhaler and relax the muscles around your airways, allowing more air into your lungs. They can also help treat shortness of breath and coughing. Doctors may also prescribe steroids or one of several other medications that help lessen inflammation of the airways. In addition to medication, doctors may recommend pulmonary rehabilitation or oxygen therapy.

Surgery may be necessary to treat severe COPD. A bullectomy removes air spaces, called bullae, in the lungs created when COPD destroys the walls of air sacs in your lungs. The goal is to improve airflow in the lungs. A lung volume reduction surgery may be used to remove tissue damaged by COPD and allow healthy lung tissue to expand properly. In the most severe cases, a lung transplant may be needed. However, this procedure has risks and requires life-long medications to prevent your body from rejecting the transplant.

Lifestyle changes are another and less invasive way to lessen COPD symptoms. For smokers, quitting is the most significant change as it worsens the disease. Adopting a healthy diet and exercise routine can also help lessen symptoms and help slow the progress of the disease.

## BENEFITS CORNER



### NEWS FROM THE BOARDMEETING

CHP will continue using its banded rate formula to determine where each entity falls for contribution and will continue tracking loss ratio numbers for entities.

Anthem will continue to be the CHP's administrative services only (ASO) provider for medical, prescription, and dental. The agreement includes adjudication for claims based on CHP Plan Documents and allows members access to a broad network of providers. IngenioRx will continue to be Anthem's partner for all Rx prescriptions, including mail order service, and VSP will continue as the CHP's ASO provider for vision.

ACA/IRS tax reporting continues. You will receive a 1095 B or 1095 C form from your employer again in 2023 for the 2022 tax year. Do not submit the form to the IRS. Keep a copy with your 2022 tax documents.

Open Enrollment changes go into effect 1/1/2023. Open enrollment meetings are being held virtually or in-person this year. Contact your Benefits Administrator to schedule a meeting.

Voluntary Life will be open during open enrollment, but is only available to without Supplemental or Dependent Life, and is up to the guaranteed issue amount. If you already have supplemental life and would like to increase your amount, you will still need to fill out a health statement and go through Anthem underwriting for approval.

As always, CTSI staff is here to assist you. You can reach us at 303 861 0507.

## CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE

