



Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease

What is chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)?

COPD is a term for a group of lung diseases that cause the airways to narrow, making it difficult to breathe. Symptoms include shortness of breath, a persistent and repetitive cough, excess phlegm or mucus production, wheezing and fatigue.

COPD includes:

- **Emphysema:** damage to the air sacs in the lungs, leading to shortness of breath
- **Chronic bronchitis:** inflammation and narrowing of the airways, causing long-term cough and excess mucus.

What causes COPD?

Smoking is the most common cause of COPD. Other causes can include genetics and environmental factors such as air pollution or repeated exposure to coal mine dust, chemicals or fumes.

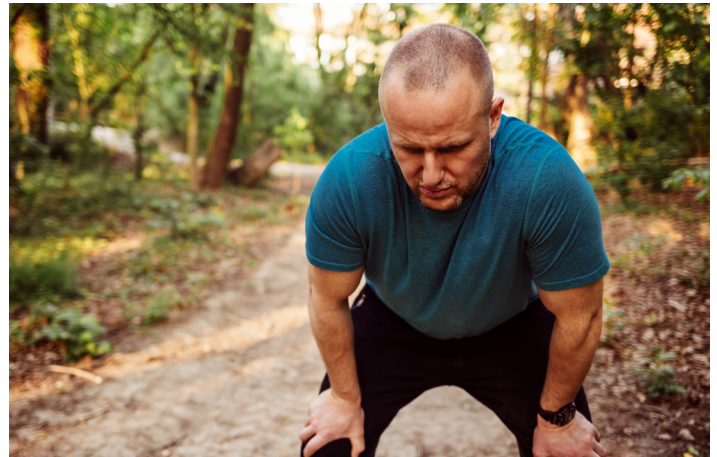
Coal mine workers can minimise their risk by being aware of dust, chemical and fume sources, wearing properly-fitted respiratory protective equipment (RPE) and following safe work practices to limit exposure.

Managing COPD

Order 43 health assessments monitor your respiratory health and any changes in lung function. Some coal mine workers with COPD may need further respiratory investigations, a referral to a respiratory physician, and more frequent monitoring of their lung function. Depending on the severity of COPD, it may also be necessary to limit dust exposure at work to protect lung function.

While there is no cure, people with COPD can take steps to improve their breathing, reduce the risk of flare-ups and stay healthy. This includes:

- Quitting smoking - this is the most important thing you can do to improve your lung health
- Ensuring flu and other vaccinations are up-to-date
- Maintaining a healthy diet and weight
- Taking your medication each day as prescribed, even if you feel well
- Recognising early signs of flare-ups and starting treatment as soon as possible.



Exercising with COPD

Exercise can have a range of benefits for people with COPD, including improved fitness, increased energy levels, greater strength and improved breathing.

Feeling breathless and fatigued can make it difficult to exercise. Finding a way to exercise regularly, despite these challenges, can improve your quality of life.

An exercise program should include:

- Aerobic exercise (e.g. walking, swimming, cycling)
- Strength and resistance training (e.g. free weights, bodyweight exercises)
- Flexibility and coordination exercises (e.g. breathing exercises, yoga, tai chi).

Help is available

Speak to your Doctor/General Practitioner for advice on managing your COPD.

Pulmonary rehabilitation is a specialised program involving education and exercise for people with COPD.

CS Health's Physiotherapists or Accredited Exercise Physiologists can also create a suitable exercise program for you.

More information

Lung Foundation Australia
www.lungfoundation.com.au

Exercise is Medicine Australia
www.exerciseismedicine.org.au