**COPD fact sheet**

***Fast facts***

* COPD is the third-leading cause of death in the United States.[[1]](#footnote-1)
* COPD has long been thought of as a man’s disease, and many women are often misdiagnosed because many doctors do not expect to see it in women and miss the proper diagnosis.[[2]](#footnote-2)
* More than 12 million have been diagnosed with COPD, but another 12 million are likely to have COPD and don't know it.[[3]](#footnote-3)
* COPD is often misdiagnosed as asthma, leading to inappropriate treatment and suboptimal patient outcomes.[[4]](#footnote-4)

***What is chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)?***

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or COPD, is a group of diseases that can cause a blockage of airflow and breathing-related problems. The disease includes emphysema, chronic bronchitis and asthma in some cases. A simple spirometry test can help to measure your lung or pulmonary functions and detect if you may have COPD.

The biggest factors that cause COPD include air pollutants we are exposed to within the home or workplace, as well as genetics. Individuals who may have a respiratory infection also have a higher rate of having COPD as well.

One of the most preventative actions to take against COPD is to avoid inhalation of tobacco smoke, as well as take steps to reduce home and workplace pollutants. In many of the developing countries air quality plays a very large role in the amount of COPD cases seen.

***Related content from the journal* CHEST**

* [The COPD Assessment Test: What Do We Know So Far?](http://journal.publications.chestnet.org/article.aspx?articleid=2467188&resultClick=24)
* [Prostanoids in Asthma and COPD: Actions, Dysregulation, and Therapeutic Opportunities](http://journal.publications.chestnet.org/article.aspx?articleid=2411220&resultClick=3)
* [[VIDEO] Not All Wheezing Is From COPD](http://journal.publications.chestnet.org/article.aspx?articleid=1680605&resultClick=3)
* [COPD Exacerbations Are Associated With Proinflammatory Degradation of Hyaluronic Acid](http://journal.publications.chestnet.org/article.aspx?articleid=2422753&resultClick=3)

***Additional resources***

* [NIH—COPD: Learn More Breathe Better Campaign](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/copd/lmbb-campaign/)
* [ALA—Lung Health & Diseases: COPD](http://www.lung.org/lung-health-and-diseases/lung-disease-lookup/copd/)
1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: National Center for Health Statistics. [Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease](http://www.cdc.gov/copd/index.html). March 12, 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. American Lung Association: Lung Disease Lookup. [How Serious is COPD?](http://www.lung.org/lung-health-and-diseases/lung-disease-lookup/copd/learn-about-copd/how-serious-is-copd.html?referrer=https://www.google.com/) 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute: [COPD Learn More Breathe Better Campaign. COPD: The more you know, the better for you and your loved ones.](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/copd/campaign-materials/html/copd-atrisk.htm) 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Tinkelman DG, Price DB, Nordyke RJ, Halbert RJ. Misdiagnosis of COPD and asthma in primary care patients 40 years of age and over. J Asthma. 2006 Jan-Feb;43 (1): 75-80. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)