



HEALTH INFORMATION

COPD

(Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)

What is COPD?

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is the name that the chest specialists refer to common chest conditions, the term COPD covers a group of conditions such as chronic bronchitis, or emphysema.

These conditions or a combination of these conditions are called COPD.

The condition is sometimes known as chronic obstructive airways disease, chronic bronchitis or chronic obstructive lung disease or 'smoker's chest' because most people with COPD have been smokers. COPD is a very common condition that affects many people in the UK. There are four different stages of COPD - mild, moderate, severe and very severe.

Symptoms

Symptoms of COPD are often worse in winter, and it is common to have two or more flare-ups a year. A flare-up is when your symptoms are particularly bad. Symptoms include:

- increasing breathlessness when exercising or moving around
- a persistent cough with phlegm that never seems to go away
- frequent chest infections, particularly in wintertime
- wheezing

The symptoms usually develop within three to seven days of infection. Antibiotic treatment is effective, but it must be given without delay once the condition is suspected.

Treatment

Damage to the lungs is permanent, progression of the disease can be slowed down. Stopping smoking is particularly effective at doing this.

Treatments for COPD usually involve relieving the symptoms with medication, for example by using an inhaler to make breathing easier.

Your GP will be able to tell you which stage of COPD you have and can offer treatment options best suited to the severity of your COPD.

Is it contagious?

No the condition is not contagious.

