

Tips for Living Well with COPD

Health and Safety

- If you are a smoker, make a plan to quit.
- Vaccinations are important. Get a flu shot every year and talk to your health care provider about the pneumonia shot, COVID-19 shot, and other vaccinations.
- Eat a well balanced diet and maintain a healthy weight.
- Notify your health care provider at the first sign of an infection or exacerbation (flare-up).
- Take medications exactly as prescribed.
- Avoid people who are sick.
- Wash your hands often or use hand sanitizer and avoid touching your face.
- Avoid breathing in allergens and irritants, including secondhand smoke.
- Talk with your health care provider about activity, exercise, and pulmonary rehabilitation.
- If you use supplemental (extra) oxygen, use it as prescribed.
- See your doctor at least once or twice per year, even if you feel well.
- Talk about your feelings with a friend, family member, or support group. If you feel overwhelmed, talk to a mental health professional.
- If you plan to travel, talk to your health care provider in advance about your trip goals and plans.
- If you are able, obtain air cleaners for the inside of your home that have HEPA filters, especially in rooms you frequently occupy. Change the filters regularly when indicated on unit.
- When riding in your car, turn on the recirculate button and change the cabin filters regularly.

Tools and Techniques

- If you have trouble clearing mucus, ask your health care professional about coughing techniques and devices that help clear your lungs.
- Use pursed lip breathing when you feel short of breath.
- Complete the My COPD Action Plan with your health care provider and keep it handy.

Pursed lip breathing: inhale slowly through your nose for 2 seconds (with mouth closed), then exhale gently through puckered lips—as if blowing out a candle—for 4 or more seconds. This keeps your airways open longer and improves oxygen flow