

What Are They?

Asthma and COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) are both chronic lung diseases. With bronchial asthma (or asthma) your airways get narrow and swollen and are blocked by excess mucus. During an asthma attack, air cannot flow freely through your airways and breathing becomes difficult. Asthma can be life-threatening if you don't get treatment. COPD refers to a group of diseases including chronic bronchitis and emphysema. Over time, COPD makes it progressively harder to breathe.

What's the Difference Between Asthma and COPD?

Asthma and COPD are similar in many ways, including similar symptoms like shortness of breath and blocked airflow. However, COPD is chronic and progressive. Asthma is often set off by allergens. COPD's main cause is smoking.

People with asthma don't automatically develop COPD. People with COPD don't always have asthma. However, it's possible to have both conditions. If you do have both, you need to treat both.



RESOURCES

American Lung Association

www.lung.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov/copd

www.cdc.gov/asthma

ASTHMA:

- Typically diagnosed in early life
- Genetic or environmentally triggered
- Symptoms can come and go

COPD:

- Typically diagnosed later in life
- Usually caused by pollutants, like cigarettes, but some people may inherit a protein deficiency that could increase their risk of COPD
- Prolonged and worsening symptoms

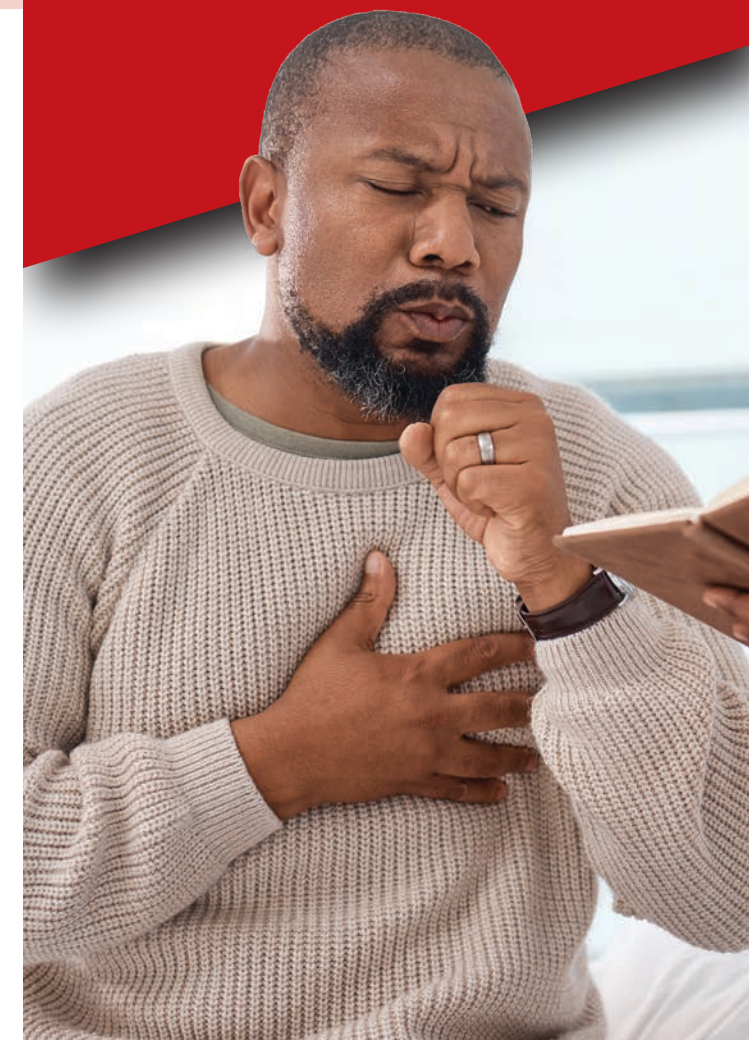
**HEALTHY
DIRECTIONS**

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ASTHMA AND COPD: BREATHE EASY



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Who Gets Asthma?

Anyone can develop asthma at any age, but allergies and/or exposure to tobacco smoke increase the chances. Statistics show that people assigned female at birth tend to have asthma more than people assigned male at birth. Asthma affects African American people more than other races.

Asthma can be caused by:

- Allergies
- Environmental factors
- Genetics
- Respiratory infections

Who Gets COPD?

The primary cause of COPD is smoking. But not all smokers develop the disease. You may be at higher risk if you:

- Are someone who was assigned female at birth
- Are over the age of 65
- Have been exposed to air pollution
- Have worked with chemicals, dust or fumes
- Have alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency (AAT), a genetic risk factor for COPD
- Had many respiratory infections during childhood

Tobacco smoke irritates airways, triggering inflammation (irritation and swelling) that narrows the airways. Smoke also damages the lungs so that they can't do their job of removing mucus and trapped particles from the airways.

Signs of Asthma or COPD

The signs of asthma and COPD can be similar:

- Coughing: With asthma this is especially at night. With COPD the coughing often persists for a long time and is accompanied by mucus.
- Shortness of breath
- Wheezing

With asthma, you may not have all these symptoms during every attack. You can have different symptoms and signs at different times with chronic asthma. Also, symptoms can change between attacks. Another symptom of COPD is difficulty taking a deep breath.

Managing Asthma

You have options to help manage your asthma. Medications to control symptoms include:

- Bronchodilators: These relax the muscles around your airways, which lets the airways move air. They also let mucus move more easily through the airways.
- Anti-inflammatory medicines: These reduce swelling and mucus production in your airways. They make it easier for air to enter and exit your lungs.
- Biologic therapies: These are used for severe asthma when symptoms persist despite proper inhaler therapy.

You can take asthma medicines in several different ways. You may breathe in the medicines using a metered-dose inhaler, nebulizer, or another type



of asthma inhaler. Your healthcare provider may prescribe oral medications that you swallow.

Managing COPD

COPD treatment focuses on relieving symptoms, such as coughing and breathing problems, and avoiding respiratory infections. Treatments include, but are not limited to:

- Bronchodilators
- Anti-inflammatory medications
- Supplemental oxygen
- Antibiotics: COPD makes you prone to lung infections, which can further damage your weakened lungs. You may need to take antibiotics to stop a bacterial infection.
- Vaccinations: Respiratory infections are more dangerous when you have COPD. It's important to get vaccinations to prevent flu, pneumonia, and COVID-19.

By The Numbers

- Asthma affects approximately 25 million people in the U.S., including about 5 million children.
- The vast majority of studies have found no increased risk of COVID-19 disease severity in those with asthma.
- About 16 million Americans have been diagnosed with COPD.
- Millions of people suffer from COPD, but have not been diagnosed or treated.



TO DETERMINE THE BEST TREATMENT FOR YOUR CONDITION, TALK WITH YOUR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONAL.