

COPD is a serious and common respiratory illness:

- chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) refers to a variety of conditions which cause obstruction of the airways
 - breathlessness after little or no exertion is a common symptom and can have a severe impact on quality of life
 - COPD prevalence in Scotland has been estimated at just over 2%, costing the healthcare system around £159 million per year
 - a recent report by NHS Health Scotland suggested that COPD created the fourth greatest burden of disease of a range of conditions
 - global prevalence and mortality are rising, with the condition estimated to have caused 3.2 million deaths worldwide in 2015
 - there is no cure for COPD, and drug treatments are focused on slowing disease progression.
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Almost all COPD is caused by smoking:

- 10 – 20% of smokers will go on to develop COPD, but just 10% of cases occur in non-smokers
 - other causes of COPD include genetic disorders and outdoor air pollution, but these are rare
 - cigarette smoke causes inflammation inside the lung, and this immune system damage is thought to be related to the development of COPD
 - adults whose mothers smoked in pregnancy have higher odds of developing COPD
 - second-hand smoke exposure is associated with the development of COPD and may make exacerbations more likely, but there is not enough evidence to say that there is a causative relationship
 - around a third of people with COPD continue to smoke, but quitting smoking slows the rate of lung function decline and disease progression, and cessation should be a priority for health and wellbeing.
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COPD is associated with inequalities:

- like smoking, COPD is most common among more deprived people in Scotland
- there are about four times as many hospital admissions for COPD among the poorest fifth of Scots as among the wealthiest fifth
- most people with COPD have at least one other chronic condition at the same time, and around two-thirds of deaths among COPD patients occur due to these comorbidities
- common comorbidities include heart disease, lung cancer, diabetes, obesity and osteoporosis among others
- many comorbidities may be related to the same inflammatory processes which cause COPD.