

# Fastfacts

## Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disorder (COPD)

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### Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disorder

- COPD refers to a group of lung conditions that cause narrowing (obstruction) of the airways.
- Main symptoms: breathlessness, a persistent chesty cough and wheezing, and chest infections.
- COPD is common, with a global prevalence of 12.2%, 15% in men and 9.9% in women.
- A 2015 report from NHS Scotland suggest that COPD causes the fourth greatest burden of disease.
- COPD is a progressive chronic condition, with no cure. A variety of treatments are available to manage the symptoms. For those with advanced COPD, oxygen may be prescribed.
- Between 20-60% of COPD patients present with depression or anxiety as a result of their condition.

### Smoking and COPD

- Cigarette smoking is, by far, the most dominant cause. 10-20% of smokers will develop COPD. However, 90% of all COPD cases are caused by it.
- Cigarette smoking leads to systemic inflammation and damages the interior of the lungs which over time can progress to COPD.
- Smoking can increase the frequency of respiratory infections which can significantly worsen COPD.
- COPD is shown to impact mental health. Some smokers feel that smoking alleviates stress and anxiety. However, the relief is short lasting and, overall, smoking has a negative impact on our mental health.

### Second-hand smoke as a risk factor for COPD

- Second-hand smoke (SHS) exposure is associated with COPD, although on its own is unlikely to be causal. Research has shown that SHS increases the odds of developing COPD.
- Genetic mutations in the Alpha-1 antitrypsin, asthma and air pollution and lung damage during childhood are risk factors for COPD. For these these groups, limiting exposure to SHS is critical.
- Maternal smoking increases the risk of offspring developing lung conditions, including COPD.

### Supporting people with COPD

- The single best way to prevent COPD and limit the impact of COPD is to stop smoking. Stopping smoking can decrease coughing, wheezing and breathlessness, slow progress of the disease and reduce flare-ups.
- A 2010 study showed that 37% of people with COPD continue to smoke. Support is available to help people to stop smoking.
- It often takes multiple attempts to quit. In general the most effective cessation intervention combines nicotine replacement therapy and/or medication AND behavioural support.
- Professional advice and support to do so increases the chance of success. NHS Scotland offer support via Quit Your Way Scotland on 0800 84 84 84. <https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/stopping-smoking>
- More information about COPD can be found here <https://www.blf.org.uk/support-for-you/copd>

Action on Smoking & Health (Scotland) (ASH Scotland) is a registered Scottish charity (SC 010412) and a company limited by guarantee (Scottish company no 141711)

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