



Lung disease

Learn how it can affect you
and your loved ones



Lung disease is any problem that prevents the lungs from working properly.¹ It refers to a set of different conditions, such as: asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and lung cancer. Let's take a closer look at the warning signs and the common conditions so you know what to discuss with your doctor if you're not feeling well.

Warning signs of lung disease²

- A chronic cough that's lasted for a month or longer.
- Shortness of breath that doesn't go away after exercising or difficulty breathing even when you're making little effort.
- Constant mucus or phlegm that lasts a month or longer.
- Noisy breathing or wheezing, which may be a sign something is blocking your lungs' airways or making them narrow.
- Unexplained chest pain that gets worse when you breathe in or cough.
- Coughing up blood.



Find out more and get help

For helpful tools and information,
check out the American Lung
Association website at lung.org or
call 1-800-LUNGUSA.

Common lung diseases

- **Asthma** is a long-term lung disease that inflames and narrows your airways, which are the paths that carry air to your lungs. It strikes people of all ages but often starts in childhood.³
- **Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)** may also be referred to as emphysema or chronic bronchitis. COPD irritates and inflames the lining of your airways. The lining will get thicker and mucus clogs the airways.⁴
- **Lung cancer** causes your body cells to break down, divide quickly and make too much tissue, forming a tumor. Lung cancer and smoking go hand in hand. Smoking is the number-one cause of lung cancer and causes more than 87% of lung cancer cases in men.⁵



Sources:

1 National Institute of Health MedLine website: Lung disease (accessed February 2018): nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000066.htm

2 American Lung Association website: Warning Signs of Lung Disease (accessed February 2018): lung.org/lung-health-and-diseases/warning-signs-of-lung-disease

3 National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute website: Asthma (accessed February 2018): nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/asthma

4 National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute website: What is COPD? (accessed February 2018): nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/copd/what-is-copd/index.htm

5 CDC website: Lung Cancer Statistics (accessed February 2018): cdc.gov/cancer/lung/statistics

6 Healthline website: 5 Ways to Keep Your Lungs Healthy and Whole (accessed February 2018): healthline.com

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Keeping your lungs healthy⁶

Taking care of your lung health helps you take care of your whole body. Here are a few steps you can follow to keep your lungs in great shape.

- **Don't smoke or resolve to give up the habit.** Smokers are 12 to 13 times more likely to die from COPD than nonsmokers. By now we know that smoking is linked to most lung diseases, including COPD and asthma. And the habit makes those conditions even worse. So resolve to quit and you'll be giving your lungs and entire body a big break. Although it may take several attempts, don't give up.
- **Add exercise to your routine.** When you exercise, you reap many health benefits, including giving your lungs a boost. Pushing your body with aerobic exercises sends a signal to your lungs to send that oxygen into your body. It makes you breathe more rapidly which in the long run makes your lungs stronger.
- **Avoid pollutants.** As you age, your lungs become more sensitive to toxins in the air. Thankfully you can take a few precautions to make sure the air you breathe is as clean as possible.
 - ✓ Don't smoke indoors and avoid inhaling second-hand smoke.
 - ✓ Dust your furniture and vacuum your home often since mold, dust, and pet dander can all irritate your lungs.
 - ✓ Opt for essential oils and a diffuser instead of candles or air fresheners with chemicals like formaldehyde and benzene.
 - ✓ Use natural cleaning products and open windows if the products you use create harmful fumes.
- **Prevent infections.** Washing your hands often with warm water and soap can help you avoid catching an infection which may weaken your lungs. Remember to also drink plenty of water and eat lots of fruits and vegetables. They boost your immune system to fight against disease. Plus, getting a flu shot each year is key to prevent issues. If you're 65 or older, don't forget to get a pneumonia vaccination too.

Need help?

If you're concerned about lung disease, see your doctor to find out if you need treatment. Plus, check out these helpful resources to find support.

Smokefree.gov
1-877-44U-QUIT
smokefree.gov

National Cancer Institute
1-800-4-CANCER
cancer.gov

