



Quitting Smoking

If you're currently a smoker, the most important thing you can do to slow the progression of your COPD is to quit smoking now!

Tobacco smoking and exposure is the leading risk factor for COPD disease progression and death, as noted by the World Health Organization (**WHO**). Smoking can cause your COPD to worsen more quickly than if you were to stop smoking. It is also important for your environment to be smoke-free. This means you should avoid being in the company of other people who smoke.

As we age, even healthy lungs lose some function. Smokers who get COPD lose lung function at a much faster rate.

The availability of electronic cigarettes (**e-cigarettes**) and vaping products led to increased early exposure of children to tobacco products. It is known that tobacco exposure at an early age results in worse long-term outcomes. In the United States, recent data demonstrated that almost half of high school students have used tobacco products and 1 in 4 use e-cigarettes (Wang et al, **MMWR 2019**).

Quitting smoking is the most important thing you can do to actually slow down the loss of lung function (**Wang and Sin, Int J Chron Pulmon Dis 2011**). While you are unlikely to return lung function to normal after quitting smoking, you will slow the progression of your COPD. **If you have already quit smoking, congratulations!**

How Smoking Affects Your Lungs

"Susceptible smokers" are individuals whose lungs are significantly damaged by smoking and develop COPD. Their lung function starts to decrease at a very early age. Even at ages 35 to 45, lung function begins to decline and this group will start to have symptoms of COPD like chronic cough or mild shortness of breath with heavy work or exercise. These early signs of COPD are often ignored because they are mild. If this age group stops smoking, they may avoid developing significant COPD.

Some people in the "susceptible smokers" group have a faster decline in lung function because of additional reasons. These include breathing polluted air, other medical problems such as **Alpha-1 Antitrypsin Deficiency (Genetic COPD)** (al-fa-one an-tee-trip-sin dee-fi-shin-see) or infections that cause frequent **flare-ups / exacerbations**. These individuals have severe disease earlier in life.

Quitting Smoking Resources

Quitting Tips from the CDC (updated March 1, 2021): <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/campaign/tips/quit-smoking/index.html>

There are many options available to help you quit smoking. Options include gums, patches, and prescription medicine among others. Some individuals believe that vaping/e-cigarettes can help them quit smoking, but before you make that decision, please read the **5 facts you should know about vaping**. You may also be interested in this article from the Journal of the COPD Foundation, **Journal Club—Electronic Cigarettes and Vaping as a Harm Reduction Alternative: Really?**

You can find more information on quitting from the U.S. government about the steps you can take to quit smoking

by visiting the smokefree.gov website.

You can also visit [Smoking in America](#) for additional information on how to quit smoking and the impact of cigarette smoking in America.

You may call the National Quitline at 800-QUIT-NOW (800-784-8669) to connect directly to your state's Quitline and get access to free local resources. Hours of operation and services vary from state to state.

Join the COPD Foundation [online community](#), [COPD360social](#) and join the many active discussions on the topic of quitting smoking.

Resources and Support

The COPD Foundation offers resources such as [COPD360social](#), an online community where you can connect with patients, caregivers and health care providers and ask questions, share your experiences and receive and provide support.
