



Nutrition and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) includes chronic bronchitis and/or emphysema. COPD is the gradual loss of lung function with symptoms that may include coughing, excess mucus, shortness of breath, and airway obstruction. With COPD your lungs require much more energy to breathe, making adequate calorie intake very important.

Lifestyle changes may help manage COPD.

1. **Have small frequent meals** to avoid feeling overfull and making it harder to breathe. For this reason also avoid gas-producing foods such as onions or any other food that you have identified to cause this problem.
2. **Limit sodium intake.** A diet high in sodium can cause your body to retain water, forcing your lungs and heart to work much harder.
 - Use seasoning alternatives such as Mrs. Dash®, and fresh herbs/spices.
 - Choose unseasoned fresh or frozen meats and vegetables.
 - Fast food and sit down restaurants use a lot of salt to season their foods. Try to minimize meals eaten out. Ask restaurants to prepare food without salt.
3. **Limit simple sugars,** and instead try getting your carbohydrates from high fiber sources such as oats, bran, whole wheat, fruits and vegetables, and unsalted nuts.
4. **Drink plenty of fluids (6-8 cups/day), unless your doctor recommends a fluid restriction.** Drink fluids between meals. Weigh yourself at least once a week, especially if you are taking diuretics or steroids (i.e. prednisone).
5. **Medications help to control COPD.** Take your pills at the same time every day and do not skip a dose. Ask your pharmacist or doctor about the possible side effects of your medication, and if they need to be taken with food.
6. **Avoid Smoking:** Smoking narrows your blood vessels and reduces the amount of oxygen in your blood. The VA has a smoking cessation clinic. Ask your doctor for more information.
7. **Alcohol:** Avoid alcohol because it may worsen COPD.