

# LEARN ABOUT COPD

## What is COPD?

**COPD** stands for Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease.

**COPD** is a chronic (long-term) lung disease usually caused by smoking.

**COPD** symptoms include shortness of breath, wheeze, increased phlegm (mucus), coughing and frequent chest infections.

Some people with **COPD** say it feels like they're breathing through a straw.

**COPD** can't be cured, but it can be treated. With the right treatment, people with COPD can lead active, full lives.



## Mary's Story

I was a nurse for 25 years, so I knew about a serious lung condition called Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). I had nursed COPD patients, so I knew the symptoms. My mother also had the disease.

At first, when I started having shortness of breath, coughing, recurring chest infections and bronchitis, I played the game of denial.

Then I talked to my doctor about it. He sent me for a spirometry test. That confirmed I had COPD.

That was 17 years ago. Part of my treatment is regular exercise. I regularly work out at my gym. I swim. I play golf in a league and I don't use golf carts!

Here's my advice for those with symptoms of COPD: "Don't wait. Get tested."

— Mary Stewart, Ottawa ON

Visit [www.lung.ca/COPD](http://www.lung.ca/COPD)  
or call the COPD hotline 1-866-717-COPD (2673).



## Could it be **COPD**?

### Take the Canadian Lung Health Test

Smokers are most at risk for getting COPD — Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease. If you are over 40 and smoke or used to smoke, you may already have COPD.

Take this quick test to find out if you're at risk:

- |  | Yes                      | No                       |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>1</b> Do you cough regularly?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>2</b> Do you cough up phlegm (mucus) regularly?                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>3</b> Do even simple chores make you short of breath?                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>4</b> Do you wheeze when you exert yourself, or at night?                             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>5</b> Do you get frequent colds that last longer than those of other people you know? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

If you smoke or have smoked in the past and you've answered Yes to one of the Canadian Lung Health Test questions, talk to your doctor about getting tested for COPD.

## COPD and Women

COPD affects both men and women. However, COPD is a growing women's health issue. According to The Lung Association, more than 425,000 women in Canada have been diagnosed with COPD and more than 4,300 die every year.<sup>1</sup>

Many women may ask their doctors about routine tests, like mammograms, Pap smears or bone density tests. Yet, few women ask about spirometry, a simple breathing test for COPD.

## Fast Facts

- COPD is Canada's fourth leading cause of death.
- 750,000 Canadians say they have been diagnosed with COPD.<sup>2</sup> However, recent studies show that the actual numbers may be higher.
- COPD diagnosis is confirmed by using a simple breathing test called spirometry.
- COPD is preventable and treatable.

<sup>1</sup> *Women & COPD: A National Report*, 2006. The Lung Association.

<sup>2</sup> *Life and Breath: Respiratory Diseases in Canada*, 2007. Public Health Agency of Canada.