

Let's Talk About: COPD



ST. PAUL'S HOSPITAL
COMMUNITY FORUMS

What is COPD?

COPD is a long-term lung disease often caused by smoking.

COPD includes **chronic bronchitis** and **emphysema**. Many people with COPD have both bronchitis and emphysema.

COPD slowly damages your airways, the breathing tubes that carry air in and out of your lungs. COPD makes airways swollen and partly blocked by mucus. It also damages the tiny air sacs at the tips of your airways. This makes it hard to move air in and out of your lungs.

More Canadians are being admitted to hospitals each year with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disorder than any other major chronic illness (including heart attacks) and that number has been dramatically increasing in recent years.

Worldwide, COPD ranked as the sixth leading cause of death in 1990. It is projected to be the fourth leading cause of death worldwide by 2030 due to an increase in smoking rates and demographic changes in many countries.

Symptoms

People with COPD usually have one or more of these symptoms:

- a cough that lasts a long time, or coughing up "stuff" (mucus)
- feeling short of breath, especially when you are making an effort (climbing stairs, exercising)
- many lung infections that last a long time

(the flu, acute bronchitis, pneumonia, etc.)

- wheezing (a whistling sound when you breathe)
- feeling tired (fatigue)
- losing weight without trying

People might think that feeling short of breath is a normal sign of aging— but it's not. If you have these signs and symptoms, see your doctor.

What causes COPD?

In countries like Canada, smoking causes about 80% of COPD cases. Other things that can cause COPD are:

- second-hand smoke
- air pollution (dust or chemicals)
- having repeated lung infections as a child
- a rare condition called Alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency

How do doctors diagnose COPD?

Doctors diagnose COPD by testing your lungs. They use a simple test called spirometry, which measures how much air you can move out of your lungs. They also use other tests.

Why is it important to get COPD diagnosed early?

When COPD is diagnosed early, it's easier to treat. If you don't catch COPD early, it will be harder to treat and you will have more symptoms and more lung damage.

If you are a smoker or a former smoker and you're over 40 you may be at risk for COPD.

Join medical experts from Providence Health Care for monthly community forums at St. Paul's Hospital. Each month features a different health topic with time to pose questions to the experts.

The forums are free and take place the third Wednesday of every month.

7:00 – 9:00 pm
(doors open at 6:30)
New Lecture Theatre
St. Paul's Hospital
1081 Burrard Street

For more information and to register, please email ownyourhealth@providencehealth.bc.ca or call 604-806-8495.

This evening's presentations will be available to view on our website:

www.phcmedicine.ca



COPD Research and Treatment at St. Paul's Hospital

A unique provincial resource, Providence Health Care provides complete care for British Columbians with COPD.

Just as important as the high-quality care we provide is our teaching and research mandate that helps us better understand this condition, improve patient care and develop new treatment solutions.

A COPD Clinic has been established within the Pacific Lung Health Centre at St. Paul's Hospital, which is an academic clinical program dedicated to the care for patients with lung disease.

What is the treatment for COPD?

There is currently no cure for COPD; however, COPD is both a preventable and treatable disease.

Good treatments include:

- Quitting smoking, and staying away from smoke and air pollution
- Taking COPD medications, which can include pills, inhalers (puffers), and supplemental oxygen
- Joining a pulmonary rehabilitation program, a special class that teaches exercise and COPD management

People with COPD can take other steps to manage their symptoms:

- Recognize and treat COPD flare-ups, times when COPD symptoms get worse
- Use special breathing techniques when you're short of breath
- Make lifestyle changes to save energy and feel better: simplify chores, eat well, and make other healthy changes

What's New:

The Providence Heart + Lung Institute (HLI) has launched respiratory outreach clinics in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Teams from the Institute are taking their expertise beyond the hospital walls and into the community to ensure this hard-to-reach complex patient population has access to quality care and education. With the goal of decreasing the financial and human toll of this disease, teams at the HLI are working to improve COPD treatment and care in the hospital, clinics and community. Some examples include: helping family doctors diagnose COPD earlier; streamlining and enhancing the quality of care while reducing costs to the system; and increasing pulmonary rehabilitation services.

Source:

The Canadian Lung Association, Pacific Lung Health Centre, Wikipedia

St. Paul's Hospital is an acute care, teaching and research hospital located in downtown Vancouver. It is home to many world-class medical and surgical programs, including heart and lung services, HIV/AIDS and kidney care.

St. Paul's serves both the local community and patients from across BC and the Yukon. St. Paul's is one of 14 health care facilities in Vancouver operated by Providence Health Care, one of Canada's largest faith-based health care organizations. Providence's 1,000 physicians and 6,000 staff deliver compassionate care to patients and residents in British Columbia while training medical professionals and making innovative advances in research.

To support programs like this at St. Paul's Hospital, please visit www.helpstpauls.com to make a donation to the Department of Medicine Academic Fund.

www.phcmedicine.ca