

CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE (COPD)

COPD is a lung condition that damages small airways and makes it hard to breathe

What is it?

COPD is a disease that damages the lungs, making it hard to breathe.

Why is it harder to breathe in (inhale)?

When airways are swollen, they become narrow. This makes it hard for air to enter the lungs.

Why is it harder to breath out (exhale)?

After breathing in, our lungs push air out. In COPD, the lungs are weaker, and you have to squeeze air out using your chest muscles (which is not normal).

Why is COPD important to me?

When it is harder for you to breathe in and out, it is more challenging for you to be active.

How can COPD impact my health?

COPD not only impacts your lung health, but it also impacts your heart. COPD puts an extra strain on your heart and can increase your risk of having a heart attack.

Why does my doctor treat COPD?

Your doctor wants to prevent you from having a lung attack (also called a COPD exacerbation) and help you stay active while living with COPD.

What will it do to me?

When COPD is not well controlled, you could be at risk of a **lung attack**. A lung attack is also called a COPD exacerbation and there are 2 main symptoms of which you need to be aware:

1. **Increased shortness of breath (unable to catch your breath)**
2. **A change in your mucous**
 - **More mucous**
 - **A change in mucous colour**

What happens if my breathing becomes more difficult?

Step 1: Make sure you are taking all of your medications as prescribed.

Step 2: See your family doctor.

Step 3: If your shortness of breath is severe (i.e. you can't speak in full sentences), go to your nearest emergency room.

What can I do?

Here are a few key points to improve how you live with COPD:

- Stop smoking or start to cut down
- Exercise regularly

Two types of inhaled medications are usually prescribed to patients with COPD. Since COPD is a disease of the lungs, these medications are inhaled using puffers to work inside the lung:

1. Bronchodilators (bron.cho.di.la.tor)

Medications called bronchodilators widen the airways by relaxing the tight muscles around the airways. This makes it easier for you to breath in and out. Some bronchodilators work for a short time; these are called short-acting bronchodilators. Others work for almost 24 hours and are called long-acting bronchodilators.

2. Inhaled steroids combined with bronchodilators

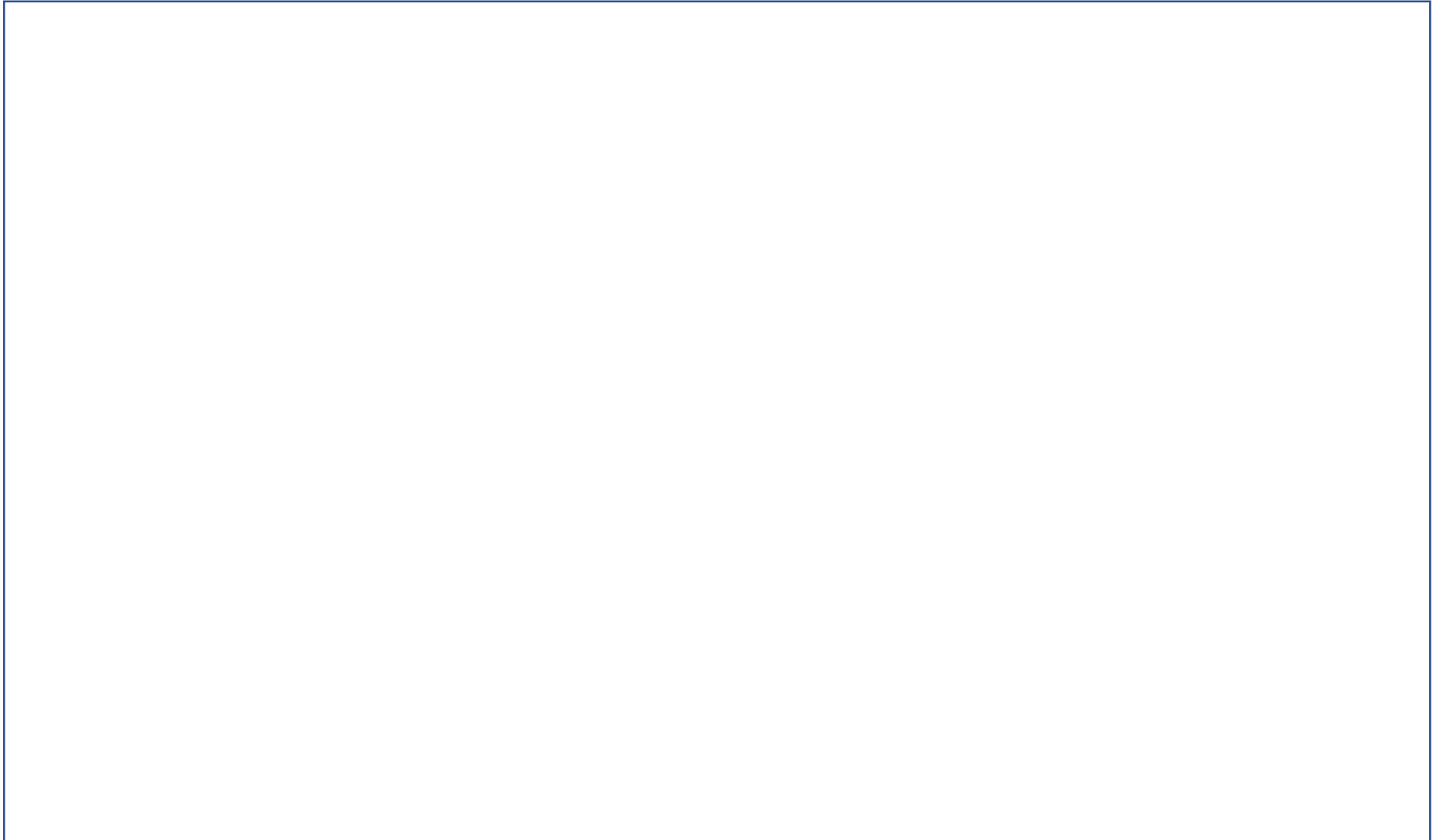
Bronchodilators and steroids together reduce the swelling and narrowing in the airway to make breathing easier.

Still have questions? Ask us @ teachandlearnfm.com

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Patient-doctor learning area: Use this area to write down questions for your doctor or use it as a space for your doctor to answer your questions.



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