

COPD and Exercise

When you have COPD, you just aren't getting enough oxygen into your body to do everything that you want to do.

So it seems natural to cut down on your activities.

However, when you do less, muscles weaken and weakened muscles use up more oxygen. Now when you try to do something that used to be easy, you become breathless quicker and you just can't do things.

When you become less active it's easy to get caught up in a cycle where weaker muscles result in your doing less and less.

But you can do something that will help you do more. It may seem strange to hear but exercise can help you feel better.

While your lungs aren't muscles and don't get stronger or bigger with exercise, regular exercise strengthens all the muscles of your body, including your heart.

The stronger your muscles are, the less oxygen they need. That gives you more energy to do more.

With more oxygen available, you are able to do more everyday activities with less tiredness and shortness of breath.

In addition, exercising can improve your overall health—helping with weight control, and strengthens the immune system.

The best way to start developing an exercise program is to work with your healthcare provider.

"What I want you to do is set up a program where you start slow. You walk maybe for two or three minutes and then you stop and rest. And then you walk another few minutes. And you do it just five, maybe ten minutes for that first time." - Dr. Lansing

They can help design a program specifically for you including how much you should exercise, what type of exercises are right for you, and what exercises you should avoid.

Some people start off exercising from their chair, and gradually add light weights and standing exercises as they get stronger.

It doesn't matter where you start, any exercise will help you start to feel better.

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Another great place to start your exercise program is in pulmonary rehabilitation.

Here you will gain confidence in your exercise program while being monitored and coached by a therapist. They will teach you how to continue what you learn at home.

Your healthcare provider will also talk to you about any of your medications and if you need to use them before you exercise.

You may use oxygen during exercise.

Buying and using a pulse oximeter can help you and your healthcare provider find safe levels of intensity for you.

You can purchase one at little cost at any store with a pharmacy section.

Living better with COPD depends on getting exercise to strengthen your muscles.

"Staying active I think is one of the main things you have to do, you can't just give up and do nothing, you have to just keep active. That's the best you can do." – Beverly, Patient

Work with your healthcare team to develop an exercise program that is right for you.

Remember regular exercise will allow you to do more things every day.

That's a very good reason to make exercise a part of your life.

"You have to do that to keep your body in shape even with the diagnosis of COPD. You really have to. You have to exercise, it's pretty important." – Bill, Patient