

Coping with COPD

Living with COPD can be hard emotionally. It is common for people with COPD to feel frustrated, anxious, depressed and stressed.

Whether you have just been diagnosed with COPD, or have been living with it for a while, now is the time to become aware of what you can do to help cope with COPD.

Depression is very common for people with COPD.

Signs of depression are sadness that lasts for more than a few days; sleeplessness; feelings of low self-worth; lack of energy and sleeping too much; changes in appetite; and irritability.

"How are you dealing with this? I know this is a new problem, and I'm trying to get a feel for how you are handling it." – Dr. Lansing

Since depression can make your COPD worse your healthcare provider will probably ask you questions about how you are feeling.

Talk with your healthcare provider openly and honestly about what you are feeling.

Sometimes antidepressant medications may be recommended. It takes anywhere from 2 to 4 weeks to see if the medication is working.

If the medication isn't effective after this time another type of antidepressant medication may be prescribed. Work with your healthcare provider to find the right one for you.

Another treatment that your healthcare provider might recommend is meeting with a licensed therapist to help you work through these emotions.

"We can feel sorry for ourselves. But having a therapist, a psychiatrist, a psychologist, someone outside of the people that you know, that you feel are judging you or that you feel don't understand you because no one does is a great help. She's always there for me. She's always there." – Marilyn, Patient

Talk with your friends and family about your depression. Let them know how you are feeling.

If you are feeling down due to not being able to do something you used to ask a friend to help. You can get it done, and enjoy their company at the same time.

Coping with COPD

Another way to cope with COPD is to stay as active as possible. Not only does it make it easier to breathe by building muscle, being active helps you feel better mentally.

It may help to talk about your activities with your healthcare team. So you know what you can handle and don't overdo it.

Another way to help build your coping skills is in a pulmonary rehab or support group in your area.

Being side by side with people like yourself can be a great source of help.

Many participants find hope and comfort hearing other people's stories of how they are coping.

Just as important, you can learn practical tips about living better with COPD.

You can visit the American Lung Association's website at www.lung.org/better-breathers to find a Better Breathers Club near you.

Many people also find that practicing relaxation techniques help lessen the stress and anxiety. And finding a hobby can be helpful as well....

"There's a lot of deer, we've had as many as 25 deer out there and I generally get my camera and take pictures of them just running back and forth, they're very entertaining." – Beverly, Patient

"I love working with puzzles. It takes a lot of time, but they're relaxing. It keeps your mind at ease from whatever is going on..... You don't have to worry about this or what's going to happen next." – Michael, Patient

Living with COPD and the many changes that come with it, isn't easy.

There are many ways that you can help yourself.

Talk to your healthcare team about how you are coping.

If prescribed take your antidepressant medications regularly.

Talk to your friends and family about how you are coping.

Stay active. It can help you feel better physically and mentally.

Coping with COPD

Join a support group. There is a lot you can learn from others.

Learning steps to help you cope with COPD will help you to better manage your disease and live your life to the fullest.