
When You Have COPD and Type 2 Diabetes

Some people have more than 1 serious chronic health problem. This can make managing your treatments more complex. And it may change the way you live your life.

If you have chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), you may also have metabolic syndrome or type 2 diabetes. All of these are ongoing (chronic) health conditions. And they have similar risk factors, such as smoking and aging. COPD increases the risk of metabolic syndrome or type 2 diabetes. It doesn't cause them. But many people have both at the same time. And COPD can make it harder to control type 2 diabetes.

With COPD, your airways are blocked or collapsed. Because of this, air doesn't flow normally in your lungs. It's harder to breathe. This causes shortness of breath.

When you have diabetes, your body has trouble using a sugar called glucose. The hormone insulin is needed to help your body use glucose. With type 2 diabetes and metabolic syndrome, your body doesn't make enough insulin or can't use the insulin it makes. As a result, the sugar level in your blood becomes too high. Over time, high blood sugar can damage blood vessels. This can lead to health problems in many parts of the body.

Complications of COPD and type 2 diabetes

Both COPD and type 2 diabetes are treated with medicines. People with both type 2 diabetes and COPD may find it hard to manage all of the medicines they need. And some of the medicines may affect each other in a way that can be harmful. Your healthcare providers may need to change the medicines you take and how much you take.

Also, type 2 diabetes can make COPD worse. High blood sugar can affect the blood vessels in your lungs. Over time, damage to the blood vessels can make COPD symptoms worse.

COPD can make it harder to control type 2 diabetes. COPD can make you feel less able to do physical activity. This can make your blood sugar hard to control. Getting physical activity helps make your blood sugar go down. And some COPD medicines, such as steroids you take by mouth or high doses of inhaled steroids, may make it hard to control your blood sugar.

Managing both COPD and type 2 diabetes

Metabolic syndrome, type 2 diabetes, and COPD are ongoing health problems. You will need to work with your healthcare providers and follow a plan to manage your conditions. Here are some steps you can take to improve your symptoms of COPD and type 2 diabetes:

- **Quit smoking.** Smoking is the main cause of COPD. Smoking also increases your risk of diabetes. Both smoking and diabetes harm blood vessels. Quitting can help make your symptoms better and reduce your risk of other problems. Ask your provider about things that can help you quit.
- **Watch your blood sugar.** If you have COPD and diabetes, managing your blood sugar is very important. Check and record your blood sugar levels as often as advised. This will help show changes in your blood sugar that may need a change in treatment. Your provider can help you know what your ideal blood sugar range is. They can also teach you what to do if your blood sugar is too high or too low.

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- **Take your medicines.** Medicines help treat both diabetes and COPD. They can also reduce the chances that you will have serious complications and have to go to the hospital. Take your medicines every day as directed. Don't make medicine changes on your own. Always talk with your provider first. They can help you change types or doses of medicines if needed.
 - **Check in with your healthcare team.** COPD and diabetes need to be closely managed with your team. Keep all appointments. Contact your healthcare provider when you have concerning symptoms or questions. Make sure you know how to contact your healthcare team after office hours and on weekends and holidays.

Making lifestyle changes

An important part of managing diabetes, as well as your overall health, is keeping a healthy weight. Here are ways to do that:

- **Eat healthy foods.** Center your diet on more fruits, vegetables, lean proteins (meat, fish, nuts), and whole grains. These foods are high in nutrition and low in fat and calories. Your healthcare provider or a dietician can help you make nutrition changes.
- **Exercise.** Physical activity lowers your blood sugar. It helps your body need less insulin. Ask your healthcare provider to OK your exercise plan before you start.
- **Lose weight if needed.** If you are overweight, losing even a few pounds can improve your blood sugar. Your healthcare team can help you lose weight in a healthy way.