
Chronic Lung Disease: Preventing Lung Infections

There are many types of chronic lung disease. You may have one of these:

- Chronic obstructive lung disease (COPD)
- Chronic bronchitis
- Emphysema
- Pulmonary fibrosis
- Sarcoidosis

When you have a chronic lung disease, it's important to protect yourself from respiratory infections. This includes colds, the flu, and lung infections such as pneumonia. Infections like these may cause your chronic lung disease to get worse. It's hard to fully escape getting sick. But there are things you can do to lower your risk of infections.



Tips for preventing illness

You can lower your risk of respiratory infections with these steps:

- **Keep your hands clean.** Wash your hands often, including before and after eating, after using the bathroom, and after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose. If you can't wash, use hand sanitizer that has at least 60% alcohol. Use it after touching doorknobs, handles, keypads, and anything else other people have touched. Then wash your hands as soon as you can.
- **Wash well.** When you wash your hands, use soap and clean, running water. Rub your hands together well for at least 20 seconds. Be sure to wash the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your fingernails. Rinse them well. Dry your hands on clean towels or let them air-dry.
- **Don't touch your face.** If your hands aren't clean, keep them away from your nose and mouth. Germs on your hands can get into your respiratory system this way.

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- **Get recommended vaccines.** To help prevent the flu, get a flu shot every year. You may be able to get it at your healthcare provider's office, a drugstore, pharmacy, or at work. Get your flu shot as soon as the vaccines are available in your area. This is often around September each year. A pneumonia vaccine can also help prevent pneumococcal pneumonia. Talk with your healthcare provider about which vaccine you need, the number of doses, and when you should have them. The COVID-19 vaccine can help prevent serious illness from COVID-19.
 - **Stay away from sick people.** Try to stay away from people with colds or the flu. Stay away from crowded places during cold and flu season. This may include shopping centers, movie theaters, and social events.
 - **Quit smoking.** If you smoke, talk with your healthcare provider about getting help to quit. Smoking can make your lung disease worse. And it increases your risk of infections. Also stay away from other people's smoke. This is called secondhand smoke. It is also harmful and increases your chance of infections.
 - **Wear a mask.** Wearing a mask indoors can help prevent respiratory illnesses. Consider wearing a mask during cold and flu season if you are in crowded places.