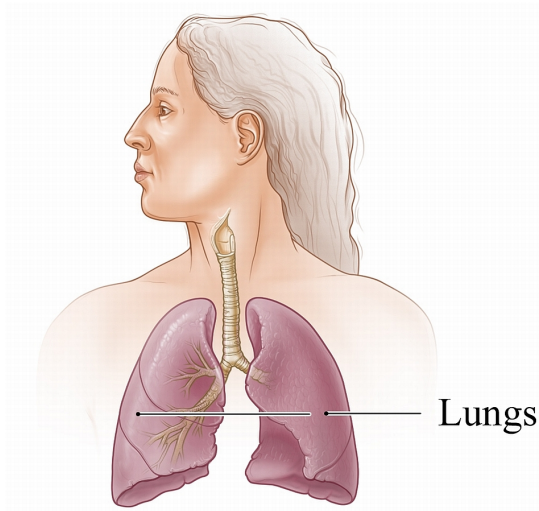


COPD: How to Prevent Lung Infections



Lung infections and pneumonia can be caused by bacteria or a virus. These infections can cause a fever, a cough that produces mucus, and trouble breathing. Lung infections often follow an upper respiratory infection such as the flu or a cold. People who have chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) are more likely to get a lung infection. Mucus in your lungs creates a place for bacteria and viruses to grow.

You may be able to treat a lung infection at home. In some cases, lung infections need treatment at the hospital.

There are several steps you can take to prevent lung infections.

Take care of your body

- **Stop smoking**, and avoid secondhand smoke. Smoking makes it more likely you will get a lung infection. If you need help to quit, talk to your doctor about stop-smoking programs and medicines. These increase your chances of quitting for good.
- **Balance rest with activity**. Keeping your body active strengthens your immune system. And getting enough rest and sleep allows your body to recharge.

- **Eat regular, well-balanced meals**. Eating right keeps your energy levels up and helps your body fight infection.

Clear your lungs

If you have COPD, your lungs may produce more mucus, and it may be more difficult to clear them. Follow your doctor's instructions on how to do these exercises.

- **Controlled coughing** comes from deep in your lungs. It loosens mucus and moves it through your airways. It is best to do it after you use your inhaler or other medicine.
- **Chest percussion** is light tapping on your chest and back that loosens mucus.
- **Postural drainage** lets your lungs drain as you lie on your back, your side, and then your stomach.

Breathing exercises

It is hard to breathe deeply when you have COPD. However, breathing exercises can make breathing easier and help keep your lungs healthy. You can learn to control your breathing by practicing breathing techniques every day. Follow your doctor's instructions on how to do these exercises.

- **Pursed-lip breathing** is breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth while almost closing your lips.
- **Diaphragmatic breathing** is deep breathing in which your belly moves, but not your chest.
- **Bending forward** at the waist may make it easier to breathe.

Avoid infection

- **Wash your hands** often with soap and warm water. Always wash them after you

cough, sneeze, blow your nose, or touch items that may have germs.

- **Avoid people who have colds or the flu,** and stay away from crowds.
- **Avoid contact with people who have measles or chickenpox,** unless you are immune to them because you have had these infections before.

Get vaccinated

Vaccinations can keep you from catching an illness that can lead to a lung infection. These include vaccinations for:

- **Pneumococcal infections.** Experts recommend the pneumococcal shot for people who are 65 and older and for younger people who have a long-lasting (chronic) condition that increases their risk of pneumonia. This vaccine can last your whole life. But you may need another one if you have certain health problems. You also may need another one if you are older than 64 and:
 - You were vaccinated more than 5 years ago.
 - You were vaccinated when you were younger than 65.
- **Influenza.** The flu can lead to pneumonia, especially in older adults or in people who have other long-term illnesses. Talk to your doctor about getting a yearly flu vaccine as soon as it's available.
- **Chickenpox.** The varicella-zoster vaccine can prevent most cases of pneumonia caused by the virus that causes chickenpox. Ask your doctor about this shot if you have not yet had chickenpox.