

COPD

LEARN MORE
BREATHE BETTER®

A program of the National Institutes of Health.



1 in 5
adults over
the age of 45
has COPD¹

56%
of COPD cases
are in women;
women are 30%
more likely to have
COPD than men²

COPD is more
common in rural
areas (8.2%) than
urban (4.7%)³

75%
have a history
of smoking;
25% have never
smoked¹

COPD: A National Health Issue

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a leading cause of disability and the fourth leading cause of death in the United States, with more than 150,000 deaths annually. Nationwide, 16 million Americans have been diagnosed with COPD, but it is estimated that millions more have the disease without realizing it.

Also known as emphysema or chronic bronchitis, COPD imposes an enormous burden on individuals with COPD, their caregivers, and the nation's health care system, with associated national medical costs projected to increase from \$32.1 billion in 2010 to \$49 billion in 2020.

The disease develops slowly, with symptoms often gradually worsening over time, limiting the ability to do routine activities. Signs and symptoms are often brushed off as a natural part of aging, and as a result, COPD is often not diagnosed until symptoms are severe and critical lung function is lost. Gone undiagnosed, severe COPD may prevent individuals from doing basic activities, such as walking, cooking, or taking care of oneself. But, with early diagnosis and treatment, people with COPD can improve their quality of life and begin to breathe easier.

WHO HAS COPD⁴

11%

AMERICAN INDIANS/
ALASKA NATIVES

10%

MULTIRACIAL

6%

NON-HISPANIC
BLACKS

6%

WHITES

3%

HISPANICS

In 2017, the NIH and CDC released the COPD National Action Plan—the first-ever blueprint for a multi-faceted, unified fight against the disease. Developed at the request of Congress, it provides a comprehensive framework for action for those affected by the disease and those who care about reducing its burden.

The *COPD Learn More Breathe Better®* program works to increase awareness of the disease and encourages those with symptoms to talk with their health care provider. It coordinates the *Breathe Better Network*, a partnership of organizations around the country interested in bringing greater attention to COPD in their communities.

Visit COPD.nhlbi.nih.gov to learn more.



NIH National Heart, Lung,
and Blood Institute

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¹ Anne G. Wheaton, Timothy J. Cunningham, Earl S. Ford, MD, and Janet B. Croft, "Employment and activity limitations among adults with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease — United States, 2013," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)*, 64 (11), pp. 289-295 (March 7, 2015), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

² Earl S. Ford, Janet B. Croft, David M. Mannino, Anne G. Wheaton, Xingyou Zhang, and Wayne H. Giles, "COPD surveillance — United States, 1999-2011," *Chest*, 144 (1), pp. 284-305 (July 2013)

³ Croft JB, Wheaton AG, Liu Y, et al. Urban-rural county and state differences in chronic obstructive pulmonary disease—United States, 2015. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep.* 2018;67(7):205-211.

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), 2015.