

- How bad your lung damage is

- Whether you keep smoking, cut back, or quit. (cutting back is a start, quitting is the best!)

- What kind of medical care and treatment you get

- What other health problems you might have

People with emphysema eventually die from it, or from a complication of it.

COMPLICATIONS

- Recurring chest infections, including pneumonia, the flu, cold, etc.

Pulmonary hypertension: abnormally high blood pressure in the arteries of the lungs

- Cor pulmonale: enlargement and strain on the right side of the heart

- Increased blood count

If you have emphysema and you smoke, it is important to quit smoking. See your health professional to get proper treatment, so that you'll live as long and as comfortable a life possible. Lots of people with emphysema/COPD find ways to enjoy a happy life despite their disease.

It's also important to talk to your health professional and family about what kind of care you will need in future years, and what you can do now to get ready for the future.

WHY QUITTING SMOKING HELPS

Emphysema gets worse over time if you continue to smoke or breathe dirty air. The damage doesn't stop until you stop smoking and stop breathing in dirty air. By quitting smoking now, you can't undo the damage that's already done, but you can protect your lungs from any more damage.

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EMPHYSEMA

What you need to know



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Emphysema is a chronic (long-term) lung disease that can get worse over time and is usually caused by smoking. Having emphysema means some of the air sacs in your lungs are damaged, making it hard to breathe. Emphysema is also part of a lung disease known as COPD

WHAT CAUSES EMPHYSEMA?

Emphysema can be caused by one or a combination of these things.

-Cigarette Smoking: Most cases of emphysema are caused by cigarette smoking. Cigarette smoke reaches deep into the lungs and causes permanent damage. The best way to stop your lung damage is to quit smoking as soon as possible - it's never too late.

-Alpha-1 Antitrypsin Deficiency: Some people have emphysema because of a rare genetic disorder called Alpha-1 Antitrypsin deficiency. People with Alpha-1 are missing an enzyme that protects their lungs. Some people with Alpha-1 deficiency get emphysema without ever having smoked. Other people get emphysema from the combination of smoking and having Alpha-1 Deficiency.

- Air pollution: There is some evidence that air pollution can contribute to people getting emphysema, especially if the person also smokes.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Shortness of breath - feeling like you can't get your breath out
- Barrel-shaped chest
- Wheezing
- Feeling tired (fatigue)
- Losing weight without trying

People might think that feeling short of breath is a normal sign of aging - but it's not. If you have these signs and symptoms, see your health professional. Ask for a spirometry, a simple test that measures how much air you move out of your lungs.

These signs and symptoms will not go away over time- they will get worse. The sooner you see your health care professional, the sooner you can find out how to feel better.

HOW IS IT DIAGNOSED?

To figure out if you have emphysema, your health professional may do some of these tests:

- Physical exam, including listening to your lungs and breathing sounds
- Spirometry - this test measures how much air you can move out of your lungs
- Chest X-ray
- Blood tests

TREATMENT

There is no cure for emphysema, but it is possible to slow down the disease and make it easier to live with the symptoms.

The number one treatment for emphysema is to quit smoking and stay away from smoky places. by quitting smoking, you can slow down emphysema.

There are other treatments for emphysema, including medications, supplemental oxygen, etc

WHAT CAN I EXPECT?

People with emphysema can live for a long time after they are diagnosed. If you have emphysema, how long you'll live depends on many things:

- What age were you diagnosed at?