

WORLD

CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE

AWARENESS DAY | November 21st

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, commonly referred to as **COPD**, is a slowly progressive inflammatory respiratory disease that affects the airways in the lungs and makes it difficult for affected individuals to breathe and get enough oxygen into their body. COPD refers to a group of diseases that include emphysema, chronic bronchitis, and sometimes asthma.

This day is marked on **21st November**. The theme for the day is **"Never too early, never too late"**. In 2004, 64 million people had the illness and WHO predicts that COPD will become the third leading cause of death worldwide by 2030. Key risk factors for COPD are:

- Tobacco smoking,
- Indoor and outdoor air pollution,
- Exposure to occupational dusts and chemicals.

Even with ongoing treatment, symptoms may become worse for days or weeks. This is called an acute exacerbation, and it may lead to lung failure if not treated. Exacerbations may be caused by a respiratory infection, air pollution or other triggers of inflammation. Whatever the cause, it's important to seek prompt medical help if there is sustained increase in coughing, a change in mucus thickness or when there is difficulty in breathing.

When exacerbations occur, additional medications (such as antibiotics, steroids or both), supplemental oxygen or treatment in the hospital. Once symptoms improve, your doctor will talk with you about measures to prevent future exacerbations, such as quitting smoking, taking inhaled steroids, long-acting bronchodilators or other medications, getting your annual flu vaccine, and avoiding air pollution whenever possible.

Living with COPD makes it difficult to breathe, and this makes everyday tasks a real challenge. The challenges encountered by people living with COPD include anxiety/panic disorders, depression and financial burden.

