

Lung disease with no cure

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) is a common and incurable lung disease that can kill.

Because there are no specific symptoms at the early stages of the disease, the victim is often under-diagnosed.

COPD symptoms include coughing, discharge of sputum, and shortness of breath (especially during exercise). The sufferer's lung function deteriorates over time and he or she will find breathing increasingly difficult.

Smoking is a major cause of COPD. The best way to prevent it is not to smoke. Exposure to passive smoking is also a contributing factor. Quitting smoking can slow down the disease's progression. Other causes of COPD include exposure to occupational dusts, chemicals, and dirty air.

Spirometry (a method of gauging lung function) is used to diagnose COPD. Treatment strategy should be used according to the patient's needs, based on the symptoms he or she is experiencing and on the findings of the test.

Objectives of the treatment are to reduce the effect of the symptoms, slow the spread of the disease, improve exercise tolerance and quality of life to an extent.

The most common medications for COPD are inhalational bronchodilators and glucocorticosteroids. Influenza vaccine and pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine can also help reduce the risk of complications occurring. In addition to medication, long-term oxygen therapy can further reduce the discomfort suffered by patients with chronic respiratory disorder.

COPD patients should follow rehabilitation programmes, drawn up and supervised by healthcare professionals to help them go about their daily lives more comfortably.