




NUTRITION FOR  
PEOPLE LIVING WITH

# CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE



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# WHAT IS COPD?

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**Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)** is a term used to describe long-term lung conditions that make it more difficult to breathe. Over 16 million adults in the United States have COPD. Symptoms of COPD may include chronic coughing, wheezing, coughing up mucus, chest discomfort and tightness, fatigue, difficulty taking a deep breath, or feeling unable to breathe.

There is no food that can prevent, treat, or cure COPD. However, eating a healthy diet may help you feel better, fight off infections, and prevent other conditions. This guide will explain the general nutrition recommendations for those with COPD.

**Please note that nutrition needs for COPD vary from person to person. Talk to your Registered Dietitian or other healthcare provider to learn which foods are best for you and your symptoms.**

## WHAT DO THESE TERMS MEAN?

**C**

### **CHRONIC**

describes an illness that is long-lasting

**O**

### **OBSTRUCTIVE**

describes a blockage or difficulty moving through

**P**

### **PULMONARY**

is a medical term for the lungs or breathing

**D**

### **DISEASE**

refers to a health condition that can injure or weaken the body

# NUTRITION FOR COPD

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## MALNUTRITION

Malnutrition happens when your body does not get enough energy or nutrients to keep working. When you do not eat enough calories to fuel your body, it starts to break down fat and muscle. Many people with COPD experience malnutrition and unwanted weight loss because the body uses extra energy to breathe and fight off infections. A diet that provides enough calories from a variety of food is important to keep the body strong and prevent other illnesses.

## CALORIES

It can be hard for some people with COPD to eat enough calories. Symptoms such as trouble breathing or chronic cough can decrease your appetite, make you feel full easily, or make you feel short of breath while eating. The following tips may help increase your calorie intake and make mealtimes easier:

# 01

### MEAL TIMING

- Eat a meal or snack every 2-3 hours
- Eat when you feel hungry
- Plan your largest meal for the time of day you often feel hungriest
- Keep snacks and water near your bed or favorite chair for easy access

# 02

### MEAL HABITS

- Use breathing medications about 1 hour before eating
- Wear your oxygen while eating to prevent shortness of breath
- Sit upright while eating to support good posture for breathing and digestion
- Drink liquids between mealtimes rather than with food to avoid getting full
- Open windows or turn on a fan when cooking or heating a meal to prevent cooking smoke and strong odors from worsening your symptoms

# 03

### FOOD CHOICES

- Add foods to your meals that are high in both calories and nutrients, including nuts, nut butters, seeds, or avocado
- Avoid foods that make you feel full without providing good nutrition, such as foods marketed as “diet” or “light,” clear soup or broth, and drinks like coffee, tea, and soda
- Try new fruits, vegetables, and other foods to increase variety in your diet
- If needed, incorporate nutrition supplements such as Ensure or Boost



# MACRONUTRIENTS

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There are three macronutrients: carbohydrates, protein, and fat. These are nutrients that provide calories for your body to use as energy. Filling your plate with all three macronutrients will help create a healthy diet and help your lungs breathe easier.

## CARBOHYDRATES

Carbohydrates are the main source of energy for your body. Focus on choosing complex carbohydrates such as starchy vegetables, legumes, and whole grains. Examples of whole grains include oatmeal, brown rice, and whole grain bread. Limit added sugars which are found in foods like candy, soda, and desserts.

## PROTEIN

Protein helps keep muscles strong. Eat protein from a variety of sources, including lean meats, dairy, beans, lentils, and nuts. Try to include at least one high-protein food in every meal, such as chicken, turkey, fish, eggs, or Greek yogurt. You can also try plant-based protein sources such as beans, legumes, or tofu.

## FATS

Fats can help keep weight up, reduce inflammation, and make COPD treatments more effective. Unsaturated fats, also known as healthy fats, will give you important calories without harming your heart. Choose foods like olive oil, avocados, nuts, seeds and fatty fish. Limit fried foods such as French fries, fried chicken/fish, and fried spring rolls.

# NUTRITION & HEALTH

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## WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

Although malnutrition and weight loss are common in COPD, excess weight can also make COPD worse or cause other illnesses. Extra weight requires your heart and lungs to work harder and makes it more difficult to breathe. A Registered Dietitian can help you create a healthy eating plan and reach a weight that is right for you.



## OSTEOPOROSIS

Osteoporosis is a bone disease that is common in people with COPD. It can lead to weak bones and fractures if it is not treated. A healthful diet that includes plenty of calcium and vitamin D can help strengthen your bones. More information about these nutrients and the foods that provide them are in the table below.



## HYDRATION

Proper hydration can make mucus easier to cough up and help keep your lungs clear. It is important to know that medical oxygen has no moisture in it, and it can dry out and irritate your nose and throat. Drinking enough water keeps good moisture in these areas and can help prevent infections. It is generally recommended to drink 6-8 glasses of water per day unless your healthcare provider tells you not to.



# NUTRIENTS OF FOCUS

Eating foods with lots of vitamins and minerals (also called micronutrients) may help prevent infections and other conditions like osteoporosis and iron deficiency anemia. Please ask your healthcare provider if there are any foods you need to limit because of medications or other health conditions.

Some patients with COPD may need to take vitamin and mineral supplements to make sure they get enough. Your Registered Dietitian or other healthcare provider can provide you with specific recommendations and information about supplements if you need them.

## CALCIUM

Milk, yogurt, cheeses, calcium-fortified orange juice, sardines with bones

## MAGNESIUM

Pumpkin seeds, bran cereal, halibut, spinach, nuts, soy products, beans

## IRON

Beef liver, red meat, fortified cereals, beans, lentils, sardines, spinach

## VITAMIN C

Red and green peppers, oranges, kiwi, strawberries, broccoli, cantaloupe

## VITAMIN D

Vitamin D-fortified milk and juices, yogurt, egg yolks, tuna

## THIAMIN

Fortified cereals, enriched breads and noodles, pork chops, tuna, beans

## POTASSIUM

Lentils, dried fruit, squash, potatoes, beans, banana, spinach, oranges, milk

## PHOSPHORUS

Milk, yogurt, cheese, salmon, beef, cashews, beans, potatoes, chicken



# OPEN ARMS IS HERE TO HELP

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## YOUR OPEN ARMS MENU

Clients with COPD may choose any Open Arms menu according to their health needs. While we do not have a menu planned specifically for COPD, each of our menus features important nutrients that you need to manage your health. If you have other health conditions or side effects, our nutrition team members can help you choose a menu that best fits your needs.

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## GET IN TOUCH WITH OPEN ARMS

Open Arms has a team of Registered Dietitians that provide free-of-cost nutrition education and counseling to Open Arms clients over the phone. If you have a question about your meals or want to schedule a one-on-one call, contact the Open Arms nutrition team!

### Our Registered Dietitians can help:

- Recommend a menu based on your needs and preferences
- Answer your questions about food, nutrition, and health
- Provide nutrition coaching to support you in reaching your health goals
- Suggest additional food resources if you need them
- Give you meal and snack ideas according to your likes, dislikes, and medical needs
- Provide nutrition information about Open Arms meals, such as calorie, nutrient, and allergen information



**612-540-7760** Ask to speak with a registered dietitian



**nutrition@openarmsmn.org**

# COMMUNITY RESOURCE CONNECTIONS

## COPD

### American Lung Association Resources

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- **Support program Better Breathers Club**
  - Website: <https://www.lung.org/help-support/better-breathers-club>
- **Online support community Living with COPD**
  - Website: <https://www.inspire.com/groups/american-lung-association-copd>
- **Lung HelpLine:** Staffed with licensed registered nurses, respiratory therapists and certified tobacco treatment specialists. In addition, there are bilingual Spanish speaking staff along with a live language interpretation service for over 250 languages.
  - Website: <https://www.lung.org/support-community/lung-helpline-and-tobacco-quitline>
- **COPD Action Plan & Management Tools**
  - Website: <https://www.lung.org/lung-health-diseases/lung-disease-lookup/copd/living-with-copd/copd-management-tools>
- **COPD and Emotional Health**
  - Website: <https://www.lung.org/lung-health-diseases/lung-disease-lookup/copd/living-with-copd/coping-with-emotions>
- **Living with COPD Patient & Caregiver Network**
  - Website: [https://www.inspire.com/groups/american-lung-association-copd/?utm\\_medium=Landing%20Page&utm\\_term=COPD&utm\\_content=iFrame&utm\\_campaign=ALA-iFrame-COPD&ga=freshen](https://www.inspire.com/groups/american-lung-association-copd/?utm_medium=Landing%20Page&utm_term=COPD&utm_content=iFrame&utm_campaign=ALA-iFrame-COPD&ga=freshen)

### General Resources

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- **COPD Foundation:** Nonprofit focused on helping millions of people with and without COPD live longer and healthier lives by advancing research, advocacy, and awareness.
  - Sponsors online support group COPD360social
  - Website: <https://www.copdfoundation.org/>
- **Cecelia Health COPD Virtual Support Program:** This program is free for UCare members and provides support/education from a Cecelia Health expert clinician, multi-modal communication options, and tips for managing your health goals and care plan
  - Website: <https://signup-ucare.ceceliahealth.com/>
- **National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute** – Pulmonary Rehabilitation: Teaches you how to manage your COPD symptoms and improve your quality of life. Tailored programs show you how to breathe better and conserve your energy. They also provide advice on diet and exercise.
  - Website: <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/pulreh>
- **Minnesota Lung Center Resources:** Provides comprehensive specialty care for people with respiratory health needs. Part of Allina Health Lung and Sleep services.  
(<https://account.allinahealth.org/locations/1388>)
  - Website: <https://minnlung.com/resources/>

- **Minnesota Department of Health COPD Guide**
  - Website: <https://data.web.health.state.mn.us/copd>
- **Centers of Disease Control and Prevention – Smoking Cessation**
  - Website: <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/campaign/tips/diseases/copd.html>
- **Citizens Utility Board:** Nonprofit that helps folks navigate utilities services and affordability, including Medical Device Protection (i.e. oxygen machines)
  - Website: <https://cubminnesota.org/>
- **Minnesota Warmline:** Support for mental health crisis or emergencies.
  - Call 651-288-0400 -OR- Text “support” to 85511
  - Website: <https://mentalhealthmn.org/what-we-do/peer-support/minnesota-warmline/>

## Hospice and Palliative Care Resources

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- **COPD Precautions for Periods of High Humidity**
  - Website: <https://www.crossroadshospice.com/hospice-palliative-care-blog/2018/august/01/copd-precautions-for-periods-of-high-humidity/>
- **COPD Patient Finds Relief in Palliative Care Services**
  - Website: <https://www.crossroadshospice.com/hospice-palliative-care-blog/2016/november/02/copd-patient-finds-relief-in-palliative-care-services/>

## Greater Minnesota Support

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- **PrimeWest Health COPD Focused Wellness Program:** Headquartered in Alexandria can help you learn how to manage your COPD and understand why managing it is important. Designed using an innovative model called COACH to help people take charge of their health. As part of our program, a nurse is available to answer your questions.
  - Website: <https://www.primewest.org/copd>

## Caregiver Support

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- **Family Caregiver Alliance:** Nonprofit that supports caregivers who provide long-term care for friends and family members with chronic diseases through education and the Family Care Navigator (<https://www.caregiver.org/family-care-navigator>), a state-by-state index of long-term care services
  - Website: <https://www.caregiver.org/>

## Nutrition

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- **American Lung Association**
  - Website: <https://www.lung.org/lung-health-diseases/lung-disease-lookup/copd/living-with-copd/nutrition>
- **Cleveland Clinic**
  - Website: <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/9451-nutritional-guidelines-for-people-with-copd>