

COPD: What you need to know

Your breathing matters.
We all deserve to **#BreatheEqual**.

How can you get involved?

Getting in touch with your MP is one of the simplest ways to make sure your voice is heard. MPs are elected to speak up for your community in Parliament, so it's important they hear directly from you about the things that matter most.

You can find more advice on how to do this on our website. If you are struggling with your breathing, or are worried about COPD or its symptoms, please speak to your healthcare professional.

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) is a long-term lung condition that makes it harder to breathe over time because the airways become swollen and damaged.

People with COPD can have sudden flare-ups, called exacerbations, this is when their symptoms get **much worse** for a while.

COPD affects millions of people in the UK but many don't even know they have it.^{1,2}

Know the symptoms³



Shortness of breath, for example when walking or climbing stairs.



Wheezing, regular chest infections, feeling tired all the time or unexplained weight loss.



A chesty cough that doesn't go away and brings up phlegm.

The true impact of COPD



Everyday activities can become harder, such as walking or gardening.



COPD can affect your mental health, confidence and energy.



It can impact families, work, and life as people know it, not just the lungs.

The big picture



1.4m

1.4 million people in the UK have been diagnosed with COPD¹



2m

Up to 2 million more may be living with it undiagnosed²



40%

By 2030 these numbers are expected to increase by 40%⁴

Inequalities in COPD across the UK

x2.5



In the UK, people living in the most disadvantaged communities are 2.5 times more likely to be affected than those in the least disadvantaged.⁵



Our Breathe Equal campaign

At Sanofi, we have been working on our #BreatheEqual campaign to shine a light on these inequalities in COPD care. It is time for these inequalities to be tackled, but it must be a joined-up approach between the Government, NHS, healthcare companies, people living with COPD and patient groups.

You can find out more by taking a look at our *Breathe Equal: Policy recommendations to reduce the the burden of COPD* report.

This disease awareness campaign is funded by Sanofi and REGENERON. It is intended for public information only. This may not be a full list of signs and symptoms of COPD. Please always speak to your healthcare professional if you have any of the above symptoms and they can help find out the cause. These may not necessarily be signs or symptoms of COPD.

References

1. Asthma and Lung UK (2022). COPD in the UK: Delayed diagnosis and unequal care. Executive summary and recommendations. Available at: <https://www.asthmaandlung.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-03/delayed-diagnosis-unequal-care-executive-summary.pdf> (Accessed October 2025)
2. NICE (2024). COPD: How common is it? Available at: <https://cks.nice.org.uk/topics/chronic-obstructive-pulmonary-disease-copd/background-information/prevalence-incidence/#:~:text=The%20prevalence%20of%20COPD%20was,2030%20%5BGOLD%2C%202024%5D> (Accessed October 2025)
3. NHS (2023) Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) - Symptoms. [online] Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/chronic-obstructive-pulmonary-disease-copd/symptoms/> (Accessed October 2025)
4. NIHR Leicester Biomedical Research Centre. (2024). New hope for COPD sufferers thanks to Leicester patients (COPD-HELP Study). Available at: <https://leicesterbrc.nihr.ac.uk/copd-help-study/> (Accessed October 2025)
5. British Lung Foundation (2016) The Battle for Breath – the impact of lung disease in the UK. Available at: https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0221/4446/files/The_Battle_for_Breath_FINAL_lr.pdf (Accessed October 2025)

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