



**Don't ignore COPD**

**Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease**

## What is COPD?

### COPD – Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease

**Chronic** means it is persistent – the disease won't go away

**Obstructive** means the airways are partly blocked

**Pulmonary** means in the lungs

**Disease** means sickness

COPD is a condition characterised by a progressive, disabling deterioration in lung function – breathing becomes more difficult over time.

# COPD

## What Causes COPD?

**COPD is a complex, progressive, debilitating and possibly life-threatening disease. It is caused by lifestyle, environmental and genetic factors.**

The most important risk factor is cigarette smoke.

Genetic factors, a family history of the disease, and infections of the lower airways during childhood also play an important role.

Occupational exposure to dusts, chemicals, etc. can also cause COPD.

Air pollution is harmful for COPD patients.



# FACTS

**COPD is a considerable health burden for Europe, and an enormous burden for patients' and their families' well-being and quality of life.**

## **Cost**

The total cost burden of COPD in Europe is approximately 50 billion Euros a year – nearly half the cost for all lung diseases (102 billion Euros). Lost workdays account for almost half of the cost.

**With prevention, early intervention and support, COPD patients' activity can be prolonged to ensure the best possible quality of life.**



## **Prevalence**

More than 600 million people worldwide are affected by COPD. In Europe, experts estimate that 4–10% of adults have COPD.

## **Mortality**

COPD is the fifth leading cause of death and it is predicted to rise. According to the WHO, COPD is the fastest growing cause of death in the world's advanced economies and it is projected to rank third by 2020. In this respect, COPD is predicted to grow faster than all other lung diseases, including asthma and lung cancer.

## **Under-diagnosis/misdiagnosis**

It is estimated that 75% of people with COPD in Europe are undiagnosed and receive treatment only in advanced age. COPD is often misdiagnosed as asthma. Many young people with COPD symptoms go untreated.

## European COPD Patient Manifesto\*

EFA aims to raise awareness of COPD among the public and European institutions and to ensure that the socio-economic impact of this under-treated disease is recognized.

### EFA has identified seven key areas that require action:

- 1 Diagnosis and management of COPD
- 2 Reduction of risk factors
- 3 Programmes for training, education, empowerment and rehabilitation
- 4 Safeguarding COPD patients' rights
- 5 Building patient unity
- 6 Financial and social support
- 7 Commitment to research



EFA calls on institutions and scientific societies to help translate research advances into improvements to peoples' daily lives through specific programmes to meet the above objectives.

**We believe that increased awareness is the first step in ensuring that COPD patients are diagnosed earlier and receive appropriate treatment sooner.**

## Things can be changed!

Change requires political interventions, including new legislation at a European and national level to ensure access to diagnosis, treatment, education, prevention and research, as well as environmental control measures to improve air quality, which is crucial for COPD patients, and of benefit to everyone.

**Prevention is the key to safeguarding health and reducing health costs.**

**What European institutions and national governments can do:**

**Don't ignore COPD on the political agenda!**

- 1** Promote awareness campaigns on the meaning of COPD, its symptoms, risk factors and progressive nature. Health warnings on COPD symptoms on cigarette packages
- 2** Encourage the widespread use of spirometry, a simple and effective tool to diagnose COPD in just five minutes
- 3** Encourage non-smoking and ban smoking in public and in workplaces
- 4** Encourage widespread influenza vaccination
- 5** Promote training programmes for healthcare professionals and caregivers
- 6** Promote educational and empowerment programmes for patients and their families to improve COPD management and to reduce the number and severity of exacerbations, which worsen the condition and reduce life expectancy
- 7** Promote a good standard of care
- 8** Invest to ensure the continuity of social and health assistance
- 9** Invest in research
- 10** Safeguard the patient's right to equal access to treatment, information, education, prevention and pulmonary rehabilitation programmes

# EFA Associations

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- Austria:** Österreichische Lungen-Union ÖLU
- Belgium:** Astma en Allergiekoepel vzw  
F.A.R.E.S.  
Prévention des Allergies absl
- Bulgaria:** Association of Bulgarians with Bronchial Asthma ABBA
- Czech Republic:** Czech Initiative for Asthma
- Denmark:** Astma – Allergi Forbundet
- Finland:** Allergia – ja Astmaliiitto
- France:** AFPRAL – Association Française pour la Prévention des Allergies  
Fédération Française des Associations et Amicales d'Insuffisants Respiratoires FFAAIR
- Greece:** ANIKSI
- Italy:** Associazione Italiana Pazienti BPCO AIP-BPCO  
FEDERASMA
- Lithuania:** Association of Allergic Children Clubs  
Association of Asthma Patients' Clubs of Lithuania
- Luxembourg:** Antenna Association of the Prévention des Allergies
- the Netherlands:** Nederlands Astma Fonds  
Stichting VoedselAllergie  
Vereniging voor Mensen met Constitutioneel Eczeem VMCE
- Norway:** Landsforeningen for Hjerte- og Lungesyke LHL  
Norges Astma- og Allergiforbund NAAF
- Slovenia:** Pulmonary Patients' Association of Slovenia DPBS
- Sweden:** Astma- och Allergiförbundet
- Switzerland:** aha! – Schweizerisches Zentrum für Allergie, Haut und Asthma  
Lungeliga Schweiz
- U.K.:** Asthma UK  
British Allergy Foundation BAF - Allergy UK

## **EFA is...**

European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients Associations (EFA). EFA is a European network of patient organizations that was founded in 1991, prompted by the belief that an international organization formed by European patients associations that share the same aims would be a more effective way to serve the needs and safeguard the rights of patients and their carers.

[www.efanet.org](http://www.efanet.org)

This leaflet is based on facts from the World Health Organisation (WHO), Global Initiative for Obstructive Lung Disease (GOLD), European Lung White Book by European Respiratory Society (ERS) and European Lung Foundation (ELF), and EFA COPD Patient Manifesto.

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