

World COPD Day: Know Your Lung Function

For Immediate Release

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a preventable and treatable disease that causes breathlessness, chronic sputum production and cough. COPD is currently one of the leading causes of death worldwide and is highly prevalent in the general population, particularly in low resource countries. It is estimated that three million people globally die each year due to COPD. This number is expected to increase due to the aging world population and continued exposure to risk factors, like tobacco smoke. Exposure to tobacco smoke and other inhaled toxic particles and gases are the main risk factors for COPD, although recent research indicates that COPD results from a combination of genetic and environmental risk factors that occur over a lifetime, starting in utero and continuing during infancy and adolescence.

World COPD Day is an annual global initiative run by the [Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease](#) (GOLD), who is a member of the [Forum of International Respiratory Societies](#) (FIRS). The goal of World COPD Day is to raise awareness and present new knowledge and novel therapeutic strategies for COPD worldwide. The 23rd annual World COPD Day will take place on November 20, 2024. This year's theme aims to highlight the importance of measuring lung function, also known as spirometry.

Although spirometry is an essential tool for diagnosing COPD, it is also a marker of health throughout life. Our lungs grow from the womb all the way through young adulthood. Throughout this period we are vulnerable to insults such as air pollution and respiratory infections that can impede lung growth and increase our risk for developing chronic lung disease later in life. Unfortunately, much lung function can be lost before we develop symptoms. Lung function is a not only a predictor of lung health, but our overall health. Even small decrements in lung function are associated with increased risk of death from respiratory and non-respiratory causes. Measuring lung function throughout life by spirometry can provide opportunities for early diagnosis and prompt therapeutic interventions.

Initiatives to reduce the burden of COPD and to promote lung health are taking place worldwide, including smoking-cessation programs, fighting against both indoor and outdoor air pollution, as well as examining childhood disadvantage factors. Although there is no current cure for COPD, actions to prevent it and improve quality of life can take place anywhere by a variety of individuals in many types of settings. Employers can strive for safe breathing environments, citizens can be good stewards of air cleanliness, and both patients and families can help advocate for more research and better access to care, including essential



medications, routine spirometry screenings, and other treatments like telehealth access for patients in remote settings. In addition, providers and policy makers can work together to improve access to spirometry and advocate for its use as a general health marker in all stages of life, important not only for the diagnosis of respiratory diseases but also as a general health marker.

GOLD and FIRS invite everyone to participate in World COPD Day events on the 20th of November, 2024. Further information about GOLD and World COPD Day can be found [here](#).

About the Forum of International Respiratory Societies (FIRS)

[The Forum of International Respiratory Societies](#) (FIRS) is an organisation comprised of the world's leading international respiratory societies working together to improve lung health globally: [American College of Chest Physicians](#) (CHEST), [American Thoracic Society](#) (ATS), [Asian Pacific Society of Respirology](#) (APSR), [Asociación Latino Americana De Tórax](#) (ALAT), [European Respiratory Society](#) (ERS), [International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Diseases](#) (The Union), [Pan African Thoracic Society](#) (PATS), [Global Initiative for Asthma](#) (GINA), and the [Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease](#) (GOLD).

The goal of FIRS is to unify and enhance efforts to improve lung health through the combined work of its more than 70,000 members globally.

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1. GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR THE DIAGNOSIS, MANAGEMENT, AND PREVENTION OF CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE (2024 REPORT)



International Union Against
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