

Treating and Managing Coal Worker's Pneumoconiosis

How Coal Worker's Pneumoconiosis is Treated

There is no treatment that can reverse the damage done by coal dust, but certain steps can help slow down progression of the disease, relieve symptoms and improve quality of life.

Once the severity of exposure has been determined, your doctor can determine the best course of action. Medication and breathing treatments may be prescribed to help open your airways and decrease inflammation. In most cases, [pulmonary rehabilitation \(https://lung.org/lung-health-diseases/lung-procedures-and-tests/pulmonary-rehab\)](https://lung.org/lung-health-diseases/lung-procedures-and-tests/pulmonary-rehab), an exercise program designed to help patients with chronic lung conditions stay active, is recommended to help improve quality of life.

As scarring in the lungs becomes more severe, supplemental oxygen may be prescribed to help you get more air into your lungs when needed. Though you may need it only while exercising at the beginning, as the disease progresses you may need it at all times. In rare, very severe cases, a lung transplant may be recommended.

Avoiding further exposure and avoiding other irritants, such as cigarette smoke, is crucial. If you are a smoker, you will be strongly advised to quit smoking. The American Lung Association offers a number of [smoking cessation programs \(https://lung.org/quit-smoking/i-want-to-quit/how-to-quit-smoking\)](https://lung.org/quit-smoking/i-want-to-quit/how-to-quit-smoking) to give people trying to quit the support they need.

Managing Coal Worker's Pneumoconiosis

If you have black lung disease, you should expect to have regular visits with your health-care provider(s). You may need regular testing, such as [a lung function test \(https://lung.org/lung-health-diseases/lung-procedures-and-tests/lung-function-tests\)](https://lung.org/lung-health-diseases/lung-procedures-and-tests/lung-function-tests) or chest X-rays to monitor you and your disease closely, as well as check for lung cancer.

Your doctor can help manage your symptoms, but you can also take steps to keep yourself healthy by doing the following:

- Maintain weight and nutrition with a well-balanced diet.
- Stay as active as you can by exercising regularly but be careful not to overexert yourself.
- Prevent respiratory infections that can make your lungs worse. Get vaccinated against the flu every year, and pneumococcal pneumonia as recommended by your doctor.

- Be vigilant about monitoring your condition and watching for the development of infections. See your doctor immediately if one develops.
- Have a plan to manage flare-ups of the disease.

Prevention

Black lung disease is preventable, which is why the Occupational Safety and Health Administration has a set of safety standards to help workers avoid the disease. Under these guidelines, all coal miners should wear a mask, wash any skin that comes in contact with dust, safely remove dust from all clothing and wash their face and hands before eating, drinking or taking medication. In addition, all mines are regulated to limit how much coal dust is in the air.



Finding Support

Ask your healthcare provider about lung disease support groups in your area, or look online for a Better Breathers Club near you. The Lung Association recommends patients and caregivers join our Living with Lung Disease Support Community to connect with others facing this disease. You can also call the Lung Association's Lung HelpLine at 1-800-LUNGUSA to talk to a trained respiratory professional who can help answer your questions and connect you with additional support.

LEARN MORE
([HTTPS://LUNG.ORG/SUPPORT-
COMMUNITY/LUNG-
HELPLINE-AND-
TOBACCO-QUITLINE](https://lung.org/support-community/lung-helpline-and-tobacco-quitline))

For More Information:

There are a number of resources available for coal workers who have contracted black lung disease. Under the [Black Lung Benefits Act \(https://www.dol.gov/owcp/dcmwc/\)](https://www.dol.gov/owcp/dcmwc/) coal miners who are disabled by pneumoconiosis are entitled to worker's compensation and other benefits. Health Resources and Service Administration's (HRSA) [Black Lung Clinics \(https://www.hrsa.gov/get-health-care/conditions/black-lung/index.html\)](https://www.hrsa.gov/get-health-care/conditions/black-lung/index.html) can be found nationwide, and are focused on providing black

lung disease patients and their families with education, primary care, and other services. The [Black Lung Center of Excellence \(http://www.blacklungcoe.org/\)](http://www.blacklungcoe.org/) supports these Black Lung Clinics Programs and provides additional services as well.

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