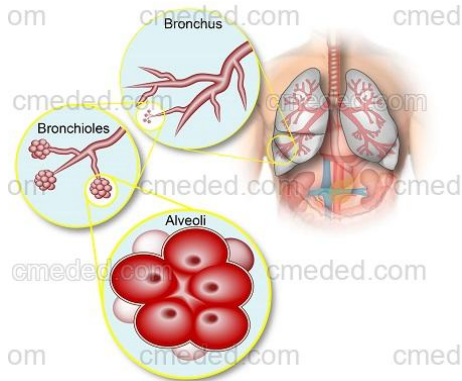
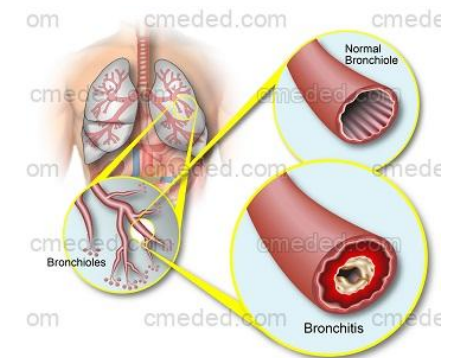


# Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)



## The Lungs

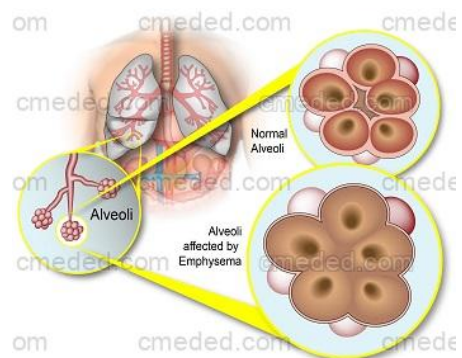
The lungs are a pair of organs in the chest where oxygen is absorbed into the bloodstream and **carbon dioxide** is removed. The air we breathe travels in through the windpipe, and into two tubes called bronchi that lead to the left and right lungs. Inside the lungs, the bronchi branch out into many smaller tubes called bronchioles. These bronchioles lead to structures called alveoli, which are tiny air sacs where oxygen is absorbed into the blood and **carbon dioxide** is removed. When we inhale, the alveoli fill up like balloons and oxygen passes through the thin walls into capillaries (tiny blood vessels). At the same time, **carbon dioxide** passes from the blood stream to the lungs to be exhaled. The oxygen-rich blood then travels to the left side of the heart to be pumped to the rest of the body.



## What is COPD?

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) is a long-term, **progressive** disease that damages the lungs and makes it difficult to breathe. The damage from COPD is irreversible and gets worse over time. COPD consists of two separate diseases: **chronic** bronchitis and emphysema. People with COPD may have **chronic** bronchitis, emphysema, or both conditions.

- > **Chronic Bronchitis:** Chronic bronchitis is a disease in which the lining of the bronchi and bronchioles becomes thickened, irritated, inflamed. This irritation can cause thick mucus to form in the airways making it difficult to breathe, and often causes a troubling cough.
- > **Emphysema:** Emphysema is a disease in which the walls of the alveoli (air sacs in the lungs) are damaged and destroyed. The alveoli are responsible for absorbing oxygen into the blood and removing **carbon dioxide**. Damage to these structures can make it difficult for the body to get enough oxygen, particularly in times of extreme activity.



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