

A GLOSSARY FOR JOURNALISTS

Air sacs (alveoli)

Tiny balloon-like sacs, located deep within the lungs. From these sacs, oxygen and carbon dioxide are passed to the blood by tiny vessels (capillaries).

[Note: alveoli means “bunches of grapes” in Italian.]

Airways (bronchial)

Tubes from the windpipe into the lungs, through which air passes during breathing.

Alpha-1 antitrypsin

A kind of protein that helps to keep the elasticity of tissue in the lung. In some people, an inherited deficiency of this protein leads to the development of emphysema.

Antibiotics

Medications that are effective against infections, usually those caused by bacteria.

Anticholinergics

Medications that have an effect upon smooth muscle in the airways. When inhaled into the lung, anticholinergics decrease muscle spasms or tightening of the airways.

Antiinflammatories

A class of drugs, often corticosteroids, used to help reduce inflammation and swelling of the airways.

Beta2-agonists

These medications can be short-term or long-term and work to open the airways by relaxing tight muscles around them.

Bronchiectasis

Abnormal permanent dilation of the airways that can lead to repeated infections. This is only seen on a CT scan.

Bronchioles

Small airways in the lung; they connect the bronchial tubes and the air sacs.

Bronchiolitis

Inflammation and scarring of the small airways.

Bronchodilators

Medications that relieve the tightening of the airways and that are in pill form or inhaled form. They include anticholinergics and short-term and long-term beta2-agonists.

Carbon dioxide (CO₂)

A waste product of body metabolism that is removed only by the lungs when breathed out. It gets transferred from the blood through the air sacs in the lung.

CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE

Mucus (phlegm)

A slippery substance produced by certain membranes in the body. In healthy people, mucus moistens and protects these mucous membranes. However, in COPD, too much mucus is produced in the lungs, resulting in clogging, blocking, and coughing, which make breathing more difficult.

Nebulizers (atomizer)

A machine that can produce an extremely fine spray for deep penetration of medicine into the lungs. Oxygen (O₂) A gas that provides the body with energy. When breathed in, it is pulled into the lungs, where it is transferred to the blood through the air sacs (alveoli). People who do not get enough oxygen into their systems may need oxygen therapy.

Oxygen concentrator

A machine used for oxygen therapy. It has a pump that takes oxygen from the air, and moves it through a long narrow tube into the nose. It concentrates the amount of oxygen taken from the air. There are now portable oxygen concentrators available.

Oxygen therapy

A medically prescribed system of providing supplemental oxygen to the body. It is prescribed when diseased lungs are not able to meet the body's oxygen needs.

Pulmonary rehabilitation

A multidisciplinary program of exercise, education and breathing retraining meant to help people with COPD stay conditioned, reduce symptoms of breathlessness, and improve lung function and attitude in order to improve quality of life.

Pulmonologist (pulmonary doctor)

A medical doctor who has special training about lungs and treatment of lung disorders.

Pulse Oximetry

This test measures how much oxygen is in your blood. The test is easy, and the result is a percentage. The doctor will put a sensor on your finger or ear and a light will be used to measure the oxygen content in your blood. The result of this test may show if you need oxygen therapy.

Reactive airway disease

Often referred to as asthma, people with this disease have airways that are very sensitive to irritants, causing tightening of muscles and more mucus production. Some people with COPD also have reactive airway disease.

Spirometry (pulmonary function tests)

A way of measuring the amount of air entering and leaving the lungs. This is the one way doctors and other health-care providers can diagnose COPD.

Windpipe (trachea)

Air flows through this tube from the mouth and nose, down the throat, and into the lung

REFERENCES

a) COPD Glossary

<https://foundation.chestnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/copd-words.pdf>

b) Glossary of Common COPD Related Terms | COPD Foundation

<https://www.copdfoundation.org/What-is-COPD/Understanding-COPD/Glossary-of-COPD-Terms.aspx>

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