

## World COPD Day: Breathing is Life – Act Earlier

### 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 low resource countries. It is estimated that three million people globally die each year due to COPD. This number is only 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. This significant development in COPD shows the importance of considering lung health from development all the way into adulthood.

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 22<sup>nd</sup> annual World COPD Day will take place on November 15, 2023. This year’s theme, “Breathing is Life – Act Earlier” aims to highlight the importance of early lung health, early diagnosis and early interventions. Keeping lungs healthy is an integral part of future health and well-being - it is now more important than ever to act sooner!

We now know that there are many other factors besides tobacco smoking that can contribute to COPD and that COPD can start early in life and even effect young individuals. In addition, we have now identified precursor conditions that can provide new opportunities for early diagnosis and prompt treatment, like pre-COPD and PRISm<sup>1</sup>. Dr. Alvar Agusti, Chair of the GOLD Board of Directors, explains why thinking about COPD earlier is important:

*Understanding the early life origins of COPD may help us target ways to both prevent the disease and slow its progression. There is a higher likelihood of a positive response if we can diagnosis the disease at its inception, or in very early stages.*



This year's campaign will focus on highlighting the importance of early lung health and how we can expand the horizon of COPD prevention and treatment by acting earlier. This can include preventing early risk factors, monitoring lung health from birth, diagnosing COPD in a precursor state and providing treatment promptly.

Initiatives to reduce the burden of COPD 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 pulmonary functions 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 15<sup>th</sup> of November, 2023. 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.

For more information about FIRS please contact Fiona Salter [fional.salter@firsnet.org](mailto:fional.salter@firsnet.org).

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



International Union Against  
Tuberculosis and Lung Disease  
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