

# Respiratory symptoms predict life expectancy in older adults

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New research published in *Respirology* suggests that some respiratory symptoms may predict an earlier death in older adults. Also, such predictions differ by smoking status.

In the study of 2087 older Australians with 22 years of follow-up, shortness of breath predicted a shorter life expectancy irrespective of smoking status. Cough in former smokers and wheeze in current smokers predicted shorter life expectancy.

The estimated remaining life expectancy of a 70-year-old male never smoker with no symptoms was 16.6 years. The years of life lost for a 70-year-old male current smoker with cough, shortness of breath, and wheeze compared with a never smoker with no symptoms was 4.93 years with 2.99 years being attributed to their current smoking and the remainder to their respiratory symptoms.

"If older people are experiencing even mild [respiratory symptoms](#), they may benefit from visiting their [general practitioner](#) for further investigations," said lead author Kate Petrie, of Monash University, in Australia.

**More information:** Kate Petrie et al, Predicting life expectancy of older people using respiratory symptoms and smoking status: Data from the Australian Longitudinal Study of Ageing, *Respirology* (2019). [DOI: 10.1111/resp.13603](https://doi.org/10.1111/resp.13603)

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