

COPD

Tips, Tricks, and Information for Patients Living with COPD

PULMONARY & CRITICAL CARE ASSOCIATES, P.C.

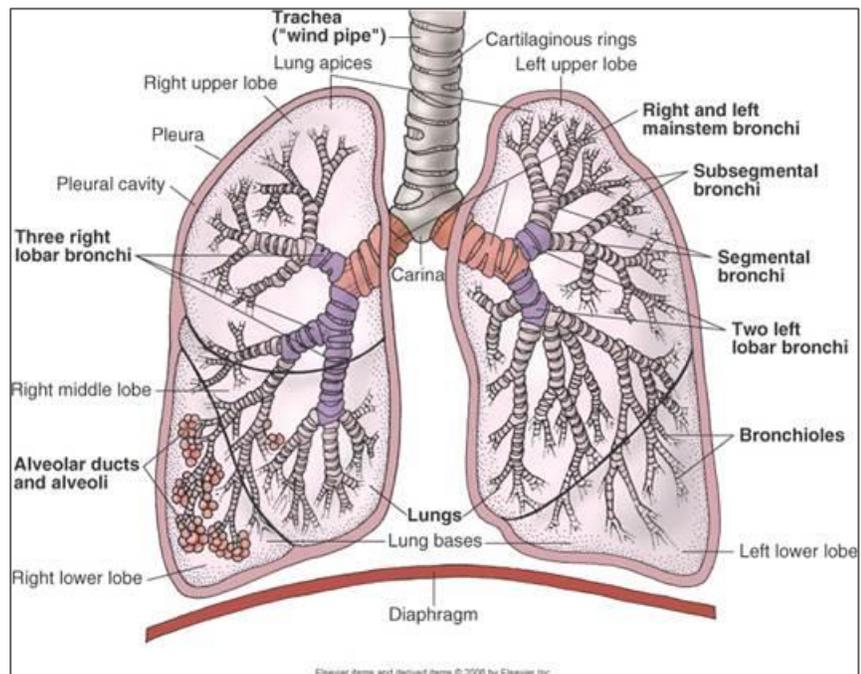
ANATOMY

Your respiratory system can be compared to an upside down tree without the leaves. The trunk resembles the main airway and as the branches become smaller and smaller, they represent the bronchial tubes and bronchioles. At the very end of the bronchioles are air sacs or alveoli and they look like clusters of grapes but very, very small. It is here, within the alveoli where oxygen that is breathed in from the air is exchanged for carbon dioxide. Carbon dioxide is what is formed after your body uses the oxygen.

You have a chronic lung condition that is affecting your respiratory system. There are two processes occurring within your airways that is making your breathing difficult:

1. Airway tightening or bronchoconstriction.
2. Airway swelling or edema. This causes your lungs hold to more air than normal but at the same time to move less air in and out on a single breath.

While your lung conditions is challenging, it is not hopeless. Knowledge is power, so let's get started!



MEDICATIONS

Take as prescribed and use the correct technique for each medication that your physician orders. An education meeting can be arranged if you need assistance. Also, visit this site on the internet for an interactive video demonstration of your medications: <https://use-inhalers.com>. This site does require your email address.

Know the action for each medication. There are two major categories of breathing medications: Maintenance and Rescue. Maintenance medications contain a “long-lasting airway opener” (bronchodilator), a steroid, or both. A bronchodilator will relieve the airway tightening, while a steroid will shrink back the airway swelling. You must take this medication over a period of time to see the beneficial effects. Equally important, even after improvement is noticed, you must continue to take the medicine. Failure to do so will result in a worsening of your respiratory status.

Rescue medications are fast-acting airway openers and should be taken for the immediate relief of shortness of breath. One of the key points regarding rescue medication is to use it BEFORE an event or activity that you know will negatively affect your breathing. This is because a rescue medication taken prior to airway tightening will deposit more deeply into your airways thus giving you improved airway stability and increased endurance.

Lastly regarding medications, it is VERY important that you bring a list of all of your medications to your doctor appointment. On that list of medications PLEASE include the strength, form (pill, capsule, tablet, topical, etc.) and frequency that has been prescribed for you. If it is easier for you, you may bring in all of your medications and the office staff will read the information right from the pill bottles.

KNOW THE ABCs OF YOUR PFTs

Pulmonary Function testing is typically ordered to determine if your lungs are functioning normally and if not, then the degree of severity of your lung disease. The value that is commonly used for COPD staging is called the FEV1. This is how much air is blown out (exhaled) in the first second of your deepest breath in. People without lung disease usually blow out 80% of their total volume in that first second. People with COPD have a FEV1 of 70% or less. This is because of the obstructive component of the disease. Your physician will develop a treatment plan for you based off of your PFT results.



PARTICIPATE IN PULMONARY REHABILITATION

Pulmonary Rehab is a medically monitored exercise and education program. Studies have shown that improved quality of life is directly related to participation in a pulmonary rehab program. To enroll, you must have a physician referral and a PFT (pulmonary function test). Most often, pulmonary rehab is a covered benefit but as always, check with your insurance carrier.

There are several excellent pulmonary rehab programs in the Macomb/Oakland area:

William Beaumont Hospital – Troy
248.964.0585

William Beaumont Hospital – Royal Oak
248.655.5790

Beaumont Medical Center – St. Clair Shores
586.443.2374

Crittenton Hospital- Rochester
248.652.5259

Henry Ford Macomb- Clinton Township
586.412.6660

St. John Hospital - Macomb
586.573-5233

BE AWARE OF “FLARE-UPS”

A “flare-up” is called an exacerbation, or a worsening of your daily COPD symptoms. Increased shortness of breath, fever, increased mucus production, color change of mucus, increased thickness of mucus, increased cough and /or wheezing; these are all indicators of a flare-up. Mild exacerbations may just require a temporary increase in the use of your rescue inhaler. Moderate exacerbations may require your physician to prescribe an antibiotic and/or oral steroid. A severe exacerbation often times requires activation of the 911 emergency system and hospitalization. One of the biggest mistakes a patient can make is to hope his/her increased symptoms will “go away” as they try to manage the “flare-up” on their own. It is imperative to communicate with your physician your change of status so that early intervention can occur with the ultimate goal being to avoid hospitalization.

STAY ACTIVE



Avoid the “Muscle Wasting Cycle”. Persons who live with chronic shortness of breath will find it easier to rest than to exert him/herself with daily activities. Unfortunately, muscles that are not utilized will lose their ability to stay toned and will slowly waste away, little by little. This change happens so gradually that the person affected does not notice it at all. It is not until he/she can no longer perform the simplest of tasks that the true magnitude is revealed. The answer is to stay active in your home and community. Pace yourself. Become educated in energy conservation and breathing exercises. If you join a local support group such as a breather’s club, you will become enlightened on the cutting edge information. The PCCA office offers a breathers

club that meets monthly during the spring, summer, and fall seasons. The meetings are free and many friendships have been made through the group.

QUIT SMOKING!

YOU CAN DO IT! If you've attempted to quit smoking but were not successful, **DO NOT GIVE UP TRYING.** There are now many more improved methods and amazing support systems in place to assist you in this courageous endeavor. Prescription medications as well as over-the-counter options exist and your physician can assist you in which choices are best for you. Be assured that if your first attempt is not successful, then your doctor will offer you a "plan B", "plan C", etc., until you have won the battle over cigarettes. If you are motivated, then your physician and the staff here at PCCA are here to cheer you on to victory!



Resources on the Internet: www.BecomeAnEx.org and www.smokefree.gov

Quit Lines Staffed by Former Smokers: 1.877.44u-quit (1.877.448.7848) which is offered by the National Cancer Institute and 1.800.quitline (1.800.784.8669) offered by the Michigan Tobacco Quit Line.

Here are just a few of the positive effects of quitting cigarettes:

- Within 20 minutes of quitting smoking, your blood pressure and pulse rate drop and body temperature returns to normal.
- Within 2 weeks to 3 months, your circulation will improve and the risk of heart attack will decrease.
- Within 1 – 9 months, coughing and sinus congestion, fatigue, and shortness of breath will decrease.

Please consider quitting smoking – **YOU ARE WORTH IT!**

KEEP UP TO DATE WITH YOUR IMMUNIZATION SCHEDULE

The flu vaccine could save your life. Persons with chronic lung conditions are at a higher risk of developing a more severe influenza-associated disease. This can result in hospitalization and even death from flu-related complications. Therefore, the CDC, Center for Disease Control recommends high risk individuals get vaccinated as soon as the vaccine is available in their community. Individuals must receive a new flu vaccine each year because flu viruses are constantly changing. While the flu shot reduces your risk of getting the flu, it does not completely eliminate the risk. Therefore, be vigilant in assessing changes in your symptoms during cold and flu season.

The "pneumonia shot" or pneumococcal vaccine is another important consideration in the prevention of serious illness. There are now two separate pneumococcal vaccines available: PCV 13 and PCV 23.

PCV 13 is a new recommendation for anyone 65 years and older, as well as anyone 19 years and older who has an immune compromising condition.

PCV 23 continues to be recommended for all adults 65 years and older as well as any adult with a chronic condition such as heart, lung, liver disease, diabetes, etc. Speak to your physician to find out an immunization schedule for your health history.

INFECTION PREVENTION

The Center for Disease Control states, "handwashing is like a do-it-yourself vaccine." If you follow these simple steps, your hands will be clean: Wet; Lather; Scrub for 20 seconds; Rinse; Dry. While it goes without saying to wash your hands after using the toilet, you should also always wash your hands before eating, and after blowing your nose or coughing into a tissue.

Here are some other tips:

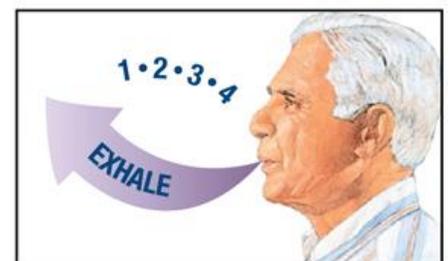
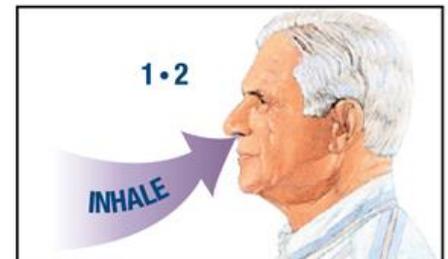
- Try to avoid contact with people you know are not feeling well. This is especially important if you care for school-age grandchildren.
- Crowded venues such as shopping malls, movie theatres, and church services may require you to alter your schedule and pick a less busy time during cold and flu season.
- If you are at your doctor's office and believe you have the flu, ask for a mask as a courtesy to protect the patients in the office who are there for their "well check" appointment.
- Lastly, if you are using any device at a time when you have a respiratory infection, refer to the cleaning directions for the piece of equipment and make sure that it is clean before re-use. If you fail to do this, you will re-introduce the germs into your lungs.

FLOWERS AND CANDLES

Pursed-Lip Breathing (PLB) is a technique that will assist you in everyday energy conservation. Here is the "how to" of the maneuver:

1. Relax your neck and shoulder muscles;
2. Inhale slowly through your nose for 2 counts;
3. Pucker your lips;
4. Exhale slowly for four counts. You will spend double the time exhaling compared to inhaling.

PLB is designed to decrease the work of breathing. Together, the inhale/exhale of PLB resembles sniffing a flower and blowing out a candle. It is very effective to "blow out the candle" (exhale) as you are doing the work, like climbing the stairs for example. At the end of the exhalation, you need to stop to "sniff the flowers" (inhale), and then continue to progress up the stairs.



ADDITIONAL COPD RESOURCES

Via the internet, www.copdfoundation.org, you will find a vast amount of useful information. Registration is free, but requires your email address. It is very easy to navigate this web site and if you have problems or additional questions, you may call their phone line at **1.866.731.2673**. This phone number is staffed by a trained volunteer who also has been diagnosed with COPD.

Additionally, The COPD Foundation also has a publication called The COPD Digest. It is available online but you may also request a copy be sent to your home.

CONSIDER DURABLE POWER OF ATTORNEY/LIVING WILL

It is especially important for people of all ages to have their end-of-life wishes honored. No one knows when that time will come and to what degree he/she will be incapacitated. Please consider who you would have as your decision maker and what specific medical treatment you desire in the event that you are unable to speak for yourself. Hospitals have paperwork available for signature and this will certainly give you and your loved ones peace of mind. For further information you may also visit the following web site: www.caringinfo.org/stateaddownload/. This web site is user friendly and provides detailed information about this subject. You may also print the documents according to your state, Michigan, and sign. This documentation should then be given to your chosen designee and all health care providers and/or facilities. This site also offers a phone number for additional assistance: **1.800.658.8898**.

