

Caregiver Assistance News

“CARING FOR YOU... CARING FOR OTHERS”

Understanding Lung Disease – Shortness of Breath

When lung disease progresses to the point that the lungs can't supply enough oxygen to meet the needs of the body, the doctor may prescribe home *oxygen therapy*. The following symptoms and signs will show that oxygen may be needed—

- excessive sleepiness
- morning headaches
- irritability
- poor concentration
- worsening shortness of breath
- swelling of the feet, ankles, and legs

Some people think that using oxygen will reduce their independence, or they will become addicted to it. However, oxygen therapy can greatly improve energy levels, the ability to breathe, and overall quality of life. Using this therapy can add years to a person's life. The doctor will use various tests to find out when, and how much, oxygen is needed.

Oxygen comes in different kinds of containers and is given through prongs inserted into the nose, or through a tube inserted surgically directly into the throat. Traveling with a portable oxygen container is easy, but always be sure to

NOTE

The doctor will prescribe a specific “flow rate” of oxygen, and you will need to make sure that not too much, or too little, is given. Different flow rates may be given for sleeping and when active. Care must also be taken to avoid having anything flammable in the room where the oxygen container is kept, such as a cigarette lighter or gas range.

take enough oxygen along for the outing. Tell the doctor when a trip is planned in case there are any special precautions.

Diaphragmatic Breathing

Diaphragmatic breathing, also known as belly breathing, helps a person to relax and get more air out of the lungs. This breathing technique is done by sitting in a comfortable chair or lying down. One hand is put on the abdomen and one hand on the chest. As the person breathes in, have her notice how the abdominal muscles relax and then as she exhales, she tightens the abdominal muscles to



Diaphragmatic Breathing

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help push air out. The chest should not move. The exhalation (breathing out) should always take longer than the inhalation (breathing in). It is very important that the person does these exercises while calm and relaxed so she will be able to get into the habit of breathing this way.

Rehabilitation

The main goals of rehabilitation for people with lung disease are to—

- increase the ability to breathe
- improve the quality and length of life
- reduce the need for medication
- lower stress and anxiety levels
- learn about lung disease and how to manage symptoms
- improve the ability to exercise and return to work, if possible

Quit Smoking!

The most important thing a person with lung disease can do is **STOP SMOKING**. Smoking is the number one cause of COPD and can make any kind of lung disease worse. Medications are available that can help a person stop smoking (such as the “patch”).



People who smoke and have lung disease need extra support and encouragement from family members, friends, and caregivers so they can stop!

Keeping the Airways Clear

People with COPD often have excess mucus in their lungs, which makes breathing more difficult. Devices such as the Acapella,TM the Flutter Valve,TM and the Vest may be recommended by the doctor. These handheld devices or the Vest help clear mucus from the lungs by creating a vibration in the airways. This keeps the airways open and moves mucus up and out.

Other ways to clear mucus from the lungs are—

- diaphragmatic breathing and huff coughing
- special positioning of the body to help drain mucus—called postural drainage or bronchial drainage. Uses gravity to drain mucus from the smaller to the larger airways where it can be coughed out more easily.
- rhythmic clapping of the chest, back, and ribs can be done while the person is positioned for airway clearance. Clapping or percussion is done over the ribs with cupped hands to help loosen mucus in the airways. There are some mechanical devices available to help with the therapy.
- drinking enough fluids keeps the mucus thin; these fluids should be caffeine free and alcohol free.

Taking Care of Yourself—**Winning the Caregiving Race**

Most people jump into caregiving as if it were a sprint. They think they can and must do everything themselves. You may be able to do that for a few weeks or even months, but the average caregiver spends more than four years in that role—no one can sprint for that long.

Instead of a sprint, treat caregiving as a marathon—for which you have not trained—and pace yourself accordingly from the start. Find effective ways to share or get help from others.

Check with your local Area Agency on Aging, ARCH, or Easter Seals for respite-care programs in your area. Larger churches often have outreach programs that include respite care. Respite care is not a luxury. It is necessary for the well-being of the person in your care and for you.



November

COPD Awareness Month Visit www.COPDFoundation.org

National Family Caregiver Month Visit www.caregiveraction.org

Live Life Laughing!

We think it is time for you to move out so your mother and I have a little time alone before we die.



Inspiration

*You want to change your life fast?
Then trade your expectation
for appreciation; you'll have a
whole new life.
~Tony Robbins*

Don't Fall – Be Safe

Watch yourself in a mirror. Does your body lean or sway back and forth or side to side? People with decreased ability to balance often have a high degree of body sway and are more likely to fall.

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Our Purpose

To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride, and competence.

Ordering Info

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***SAFETY TIPS*—Flu and Pneumonia**

Influenza, commonly known as the “flu,” is an extremely contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza A or B viruses. Flu appears most frequently in winter and early spring. People with COPD become sick during flu season, and the flu can lead to pneumonia. It’s important to stay current and get vaccinated each year — preferably during October or November. But anytime before flu season begins or even during is good. People with COPD and their caregivers should always—

- ★ stay away from other people with colds or the flu
- ★ wash their hands often and clean the telephone, door knobs, railings, etc. with antibacterial soap after use to prevent the spread of germs
- ★ ask the doctor about getting a flu shot (pneumonia shots are also available)
- ★ go to the doctor as soon as they come down with the flu or a cold

The American Lung Association offers an online flu-vaccine clinic locator. Visit www.lung.org, enter your zip code and a date (or dates), and you’ll get info about clinics scheduled in your area.

NEXT ISSUE... FIRE SAFETY