



Breathing Easy Outlook

STAYING HEALTHY ■ LIVING WELL

FALL 2010

Getting Dressed Is Easy with COPD

“One, two, buckle my shoe” isn’t always so easy when you have COPD. Reaching, bending, and moving your arms can make you feel breathless. Just getting showered and dressed in the morning can be a lot of work. Keep yourself looking sharp with these tips from the American Lung Association.

Fresh as a Daisy

Use a shower stool and sit

while you shower, shave, and dry off. Some people find a handheld shower nozzle is helpful. To dry off with less effort, slip into a soft terry-cloth robe. Avoid excessively hot water to reduce steam and breathlessness.

Dressing Smart

Keep clothing and grooming tools within easy reach. When you go to bed, lay your clothes

for the next day on a bedside chair or dresser. And try this nifty trick: Put your under-pants inside your pants and pull on both at once. To avoid chest or stomach constriction and discomfort, women can wear a camisole instead of a bra, and men can trade a belt for suspenders. Lastly, ease into comfortable slip-on shoes.

These simple steps can help get your day off to a good start.



What's That Noise?

Do you hear a ringing, hissing, or clicking sound in your ears? The condition is called tinnitus, and for many people it can be distracting. In severe cases, the noise can be so loud that sufferers cannot lead a normal life.

Experts don't know exactly what causes the ringing, which can be constant or intermittent. But some likely sources include:

- Hearing loss
- Excessive earwax
- Medications
- Ear or sinus infections
- Allergies
- Cardiovascular disease

If you suffer from tinnitus, see your doctor. There is no cure for the condition. But, these steps may help lessen the severity of tinnitus:

- Turn on low-level background noise, such as gentle music, to make the ringing seem softer.
- Take steps to control your blood pressure.
- Avoid stimulants, like caffeine and nicotine.
- Consider wearing a hearing aid, which can mask the ringing.

Good Health Guidelines

For people with COPD, it's important to make sure the following tests and vaccines are kept current:

- Spirometry test
- Flu vaccine
- Pneumonia vaccine

Be sure to talk with your health care provider about these topics:

- Writing an Action Plan
- Having a nutritional assessment
- Reviewing your exercise routine
- Taking part in a pulmonary education program
- Quitting smoking

A CLOSER LOOK

Review Your Exercise Routine

Are you ready to gain the benefits of exercise but feel anxious about starting? Many people with COPD worry about shortness of breath. Exercise is safe—and beneficial—for nearly everyone. Just be sure to see your doctor first. Together you can:

- Plan activities to boost both muscle strength and lung and heart fitness
- Determine a safe level of exertion
- Assess whether you should use a metered-dose inhaler before exercise
- Determine whether you need oxygen therapy during exercise
- Decide whether you should join a pulmonary rehabilitation program that teaches you the best ways to exercise and control breathlessness

Exercise is vital to feeling your best—so lace up your sneakers and enjoy!

Although these are suggested guidelines for care, please check with your benefits plan for coverage.

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Pulmonary Rehabilitation:

Giving You Tools for Success

If you were offered the chance to feel better, breathe easier, and have more energy, would you take it? A pulmonary rehabilitation (PR) program does just that. It teaches you how to manage your COPD, control symptoms, and get more out of life. A study in the *International Journal of COPD* found that most people who attended a PR program improved their ability to be active, and those with severe COPD got the most benefit.

What's a PR Program All About?

A PR program offers individualized education and supervised exercise to improve symptoms and function. You'll work closely with doctors, nurses, and therapists to identify your personal goals and needs. In this team approach, you're the most important player.

Programs include exercises to build strength and endurance, breathing exercises, nutritional guidance, and more. These all help you stay active and get through your day-to-day activities better.

You'll also learn how your lungs work and how to manage breathing problems. Special breathing techniques for COPD can help you control breathlessness at rest and with activities. You'll learn about your COPD symptoms and how to recognize flare-ups, too. Then, you can get early treatment before breathing problems become worse.

Having COPD affects every part of your life. That's why many PR programs teach patients how to plan meals to support nutritional needs and help manage weight. Therapists also help with issues such as stress, depression, and the impact COPD has on your social life and quality of life.

What's the Long-Term Benefit?

Once you learn these new skills, you'll feel more confident and won't have to visit your doctor as often. In a nutshell, a PR program can help you:

- Breathe more efficiently and have fewer breathing difficulties
- Have the energy to get through your daily activities more easily
- Develop and maintain healthy lifestyle behaviors

- Learn about COPD and your treatment options
- Stay out of the hospital or shorten hospital stays

How to Learn More

Call your doctor or local American Lung Association affiliate or visit www.aacvpr.org for more about PR programs offered in your community. Be sure to check with your health plan to find out if PR is a covered service.



Breathe with Ease This Autumn: Give Germs the Boot

Along with the gorgeous red and yellow leaves of fall comes something much less welcome: cold and flu bugs. These troublemakers can make you pretty miserable all on their own, but they can also trigger complications, including severe breathing problems and pneumonia. By taking the right steps, you can help keep these bad bugs away.



Germier Misery

When someone has COPD, it may be easier to catch a cold or the flu, according to the American Academy of Family Physicians. These illnesses are caused by viruses that infect the upper respiratory tract—the throat, nose, and sinuses. When people with COPD get a cold or the flu, they can get sicker than people without COPD. The infection can cause their COPD to get worse. It can also set the stage for pneumonia.

Pneumonia is an infection in the lungs. It can be caused by viruses or bacteria and can be mild or severe. After having a cold or the flu, your defenses

can be weak. Your weakened immune system may allow germs in the body to spread and infect the lungs. But you can also get pneumonia without having a cold or the flu first.

Keep Your Guard Up

Pneumonia can make those with COPD severely ill. To avoid these serious problems, do everything you can to prevent catching a cold or the flu. You've probably heard these rules before, but they're worth repeating now that flu season is here:

- Wash your hands with warm, soapy water often or use alcohol-based hand

sanitizing gel to prevent germs from spreading.

- Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose, and mouth. Touching the face with germ-ridden hands is a good way to catch a cold or the flu.
- Stay away from people who are sick.
- To keep those around you from getting sick, cover your mouth and nose completely when you cough or sneeze. Ask them to do the same if they are sick.

A Shot in the Arm

Nobody enjoys getting a shot, but you're less likely to get the flu or pneumonia if you've been

vaccinated against these stealthy germs.

Get a flu shot every fall to keep your defenses strong. The viruses that cause the flu are different every year, so last year's flu shot probably won't protect you this year. The best time to get your shot is September or October. But it's never too late. Getting a shot later in the flu season, which lasts until March, can still protect you. The vaccine starts to work in about two weeks. Although it doesn't provide 100 percent protection, it greatly reduces your chances of getting sick. And if you do get sick, your symptoms will probably be less severe.

Adults ages 65 and older and adults younger than age 65 with a chronic health condition should get a one-time pneumonia vaccination. If you're age 65 or older and received your first dose before you turned 65, a second dose is recommended at least five years after the first dose. If you're not sure if you need a pneumonia vaccination, ask your doctor.

Seek Help

If you do become ill, see your doctor right away. This is especially important if you are having trouble breathing, have chest pain, have a fever, or are coughing up yellow, green, or bloody mucus or phlegm. The right medications, such as antibiotics, bronchodilators, and steroids, may help you recover more quickly and breathe more easily. And while you're recovering, don't forget Grandma's basics: plenty of rest and fluids.

This autumn, enjoy the crisp air and changing colors—and breathe easy by keeping the germs away.



Even Mild COPD Affects the Heart

You've probably heard the old tune, "The thighbone's connected to the hip bone ..." Everything in the body is connected to something else. The lungs are no exception. It's been known for a long time that having severe COPD can harm the heart. But it has been less clear whether mild COPD can cause heart trouble.

A study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* found that having mild COPD causes wear and tear on the heart. The researchers gave breathing tests to more than 2,800 people to test lung health. Each person also had an imaging scan of the heart to check the heart's strength. Even people with mild lung disease turned out to have weakened hearts.

Why Is This of Concern?

A weak heart can't pump as much blood with each beat. That means the body's tissues don't get enough oxygen and nutrients.

When the heart becomes very weak, it is called heart failure. This doesn't mean the heart isn't working at all. But people with heart failure often feel tired, they may have breathing problems, and fluid can build up in their lungs.

What Can You Do?

By managing your COPD, you may help your heart stay healthy. A healthy lifestyle does wonders, too. So stay physically active and eat a healthy diet. And if you take medicine for COPD, high blood pressure, or cholesterol, be sure to take it as prescribed. After all, everything is connected!



Breathing exercise.

An exercise that helps you decrease and manage breathing problems. Breathing exercises are often a component of pulmonary rehabilitation.

Bronchodilator. A medicine that helps make it easier to breathe by relaxing the muscles near your airways.

Folate. A B vitamin that helps your body create healthy cells. Folate is important for everyone, but it's especially necessary for women who are pregnant because it prevents certain birth defects. It can be found in some foods, like beans and green leafy vegetables, and in dietary supplements.

Oxygen. Your body's tissues and organs need oxygen to work properly. Your lungs transport oxygen-rich blood to your heart, which pumps it to other parts of your body. If you have heart failure, your weakened heart can't get enough oxygen to your body's organs and tissues.

Questions & Answers: Normal Worry or Chronic Anxiety?

Q. What's the difference between anxiety that happens once in a while and more frequently?

A. Everyone gets worried from time to time. But if you frequently feel very anxious about everyday occurrences for at least six months, you may have chronic anxiety. Other signs of this treatable illness include:

- Sleeplessness and fatigue
- Headaches
- Irritability
- Sweating
- Breathlessness
- Nausea

Q. Who is at high risk for chronic anxiety?

A. Chronic anxiety can strike anytime but most commonly begins during your 20s. About twice as many women as men are affected.

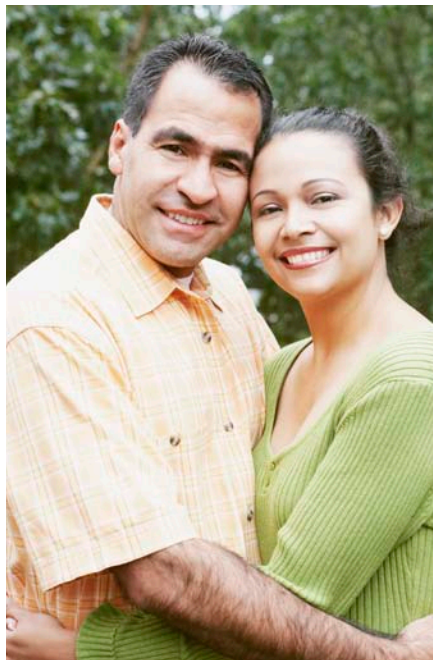
Some researchers think chronic anxiety runs in families. And smoking may increase teens' risk of developing it.

Q. How is chronic anxiety usually treated?

A. Psychotherapy and prescription medicines, such as antidepressants and anti-anxiety drugs, are used to treat chronic anxiety.

Aerobic exercise can also help reduce anxiety. But be wary of excessive caffeine and nicotine, which can worsen anxiety symptoms.

Some people use supplements, such as kava, to treat anxiety. But some herbs can cause side effects. For instance, kava has been linked to liver problems in some people. Before taking any herbal product, talk with your doctor.



Cause for Concern?

Panic disorder causes feelings of terror—panic attacks—that strike suddenly. Between attacks, you may develop chronic anxiety, worrying when the next attack will strike.

Panic attack symptoms can resemble those of a heart attack—such as chest pain, a pounding heart, and dizziness. But they are not life-threatening and usually subside within 10 minutes. But left untreated, it can lead to depression and other health problems.

Bring on the Beans!

Are you full of beans? If not, you should be. Dried beans and peas, or legumes, are nutritious, inexpensive, and loaded with good taste. Here's why they deserve a place on your plate.

Health Kudos

Legumes are a good source of fiber and protein. They're also chock-full of important vitamins and minerals, such as potassium, folate, calcium, iron, and zinc. To top it off, they're low in sodium and contain no saturated fat or cholesterol. Eating beans can not only lower cholesterol but also help prevent heart disease.

How to Get Yours

The U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends eating 3 cups of dried beans a week. That's not hard to do. You can choose from dozens of varieties. Black, kidney, pinto, great northern, navy, cranberry, garbanzo, and adzuki beans are the most familiar ones, along with quicker-cooking lentils, split peas, and black-eyed peas.

For good health and great taste, try adding these budget-friendly beans to your diet with these tips:

- Serve baked beans as a side dish.
- Add rinsed canned beans to salads, casseroles, and soups.
- Enjoy a zesty black bean and corn salad.
- Fill warm tortillas with pinto beans, low-fat refried beans, or black beans. Add chopped tomatoes, shredded cheese, and salsa.
- Dip pita bread wedges in hummus, a pureed garbanzo bean dip.

If you find that beans make you feel bloated, eat smaller portions.



Black Bean Chili

Serves 6

Ingredients

- 1 lb. black beans
- 2 cups onion (about 2 large), chopped
- 1 cup sweet pepper (red, yellow, or green), chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, crushed
- 2 tsp. chili powder
- 2 tsp. cumin
- 2 tsp. dried cilantro
- 1 28-oz. can tomatoes
- Fat-free sour cream and chopped green onions, if desired

Directions

Soak beans according to package directions. Rinse. Add all ingredients except tomatoes to 3 quarts of water. Bring to boil, then reduce to low heat. Simmer for about two hours, until beans are soft and water is gone. Add tomatoes. Cook until tomatoes are heated. Add salt and pepper to taste. Garnish with fat-free sour cream and chopped green onions.



Nutrition Information

Each serving contains approximately 333 calories, 20 g protein, 2 g fat, no cholesterol, 63 g carbohydrate, 15 g fiber, 204 milligrams sodium.

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