March 2020

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Caregiving in The Comfort of Home®

Caregiver Assistance News

"CARING FOR YOU...CARING FOR OTHERS"

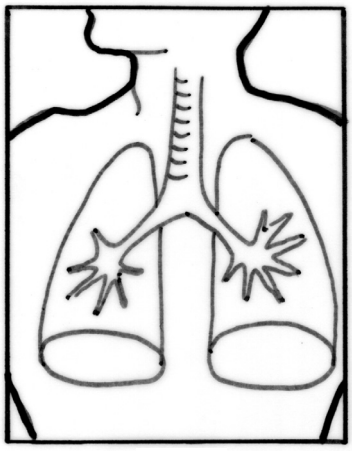
Understanding Lung Disease

Caring for someone with a chronic illness such as lung disease requires an understanding of how different chronic lung diseases affect different people. Chronic lung disease is not always noticeable to others unless the person is on oxygen therapy or uses a scooter or wheelchair.

People with lung disease may try to hide their symptoms or shrug them off by saying they're just tired or had a busy day. Many times it's hard for them to ask for help, and they may get angry at their caregiver or family members for even offering to help. When a person with lung disease has difficulty breathing or is extremely fatigued, he or she feels a loss of control and may try to control other things around him (like his caregiver or family). He may also feel guilty if he smoked in the past, and you, the caregiver, may feel some resentment toward him if he did smoke.

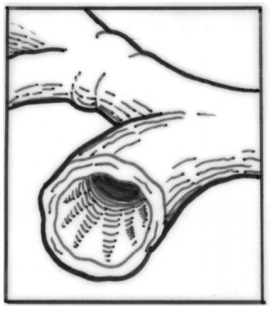
Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) is long-term blockage of air movement in the lungs. It includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis.

Think of the lungs like an upside down tree, with the windpipe (trachea) being the trunk, the bronchial tubes the branches and the air sacs as the leaves. Because there are millions of these tiny air sacs, a lot of damage can be done before a person notices breathing problems. Because oxygen moves into the bloodstream through these tiny air sacs, when they are damaged we cannot get enough oxygen into our body.

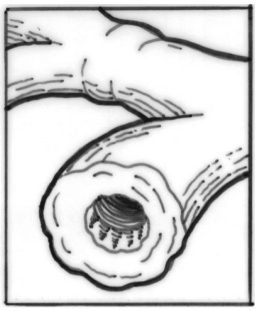


Lungs

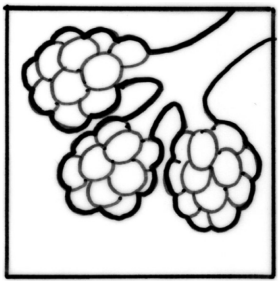
A person with COPD may have either emphysema or bronchitis, but most people with COPD have both. Some may also have symptoms similar to asthma. In *emphysema*, there is damage to the walls of the air sacs in the lungs that prevents transfer of oxygen into the bloodstream. The lungs lose their ability to stretch, producing shortness of breath during activity. In *chronic bronchitis* the damage is in the breathing tubes (bronchial tubes), which become inflamed and swollen and produce large amounts of mucus, making it difficult to get air in and out of the lungs.



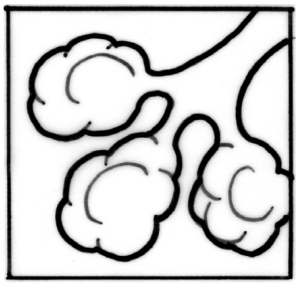
Healthy breathing tube



Closed-in airway makes breathing difficult



Healthy air sacs



Emphysema

Source: The Comfort of Home for Chronic Lung Disease

Article continues on page 2

Adapted from The Comfort of Home: Caregiver Series, © 2020 CareTrust Publications. www.comfortofhome.com

Causes of COPD

The most common cause of COPD is cigarette smoking. Other causes are:

✔ Breathing in dust, chemicals and coal dust or silica at work
✔ Indoor air pollution from cooking fuels and heating in poorly ventilated homes
✔ Secondhand smoke
✔ Childhood lung infections
✔ Only about 2% of cases are inherited

Symptoms of COPD

The first symptom of COPD is usually coughing that produces mucus, followed by shortness of breath after activities such as climbing the stairs.

As breathing difficulties worsen, people with COPD may eventually get tired dressing and bathing, lose the ability to concentrate, and put strain on their heart because their lungs are not processing enough oxygen, causing swollen feet, ankles and legs.

Avoid Air Pollution and Pollen

People with lung disease may be affected by irritating substances in the air, or they may have allergies to pollen. Inside or outside of the home they should always avoid dust, smoke, fumes from wood- or coal-burning stoves, and strong odors. People highly allergic to mold may have trouble breathing if exposed to it.

Stress Relief

Stress can make breathing more difficult. When people have trouble breathing, they may become anxious, which can make breathing even more of a problem. Relaxation techniques such as meditation, or tensing and relaxing muscle groups are very helpful.

Slow Down

People with COPD need to conserve their energy so they don't become exhausted. Here are a few tips for doing that:

✔ Take it easy; move slowly; sit while doing chores or other activities.
✔ Avoid lifting and bending; keep household items within easy reach.
✔ Rest after eating.
✔ Use a cart with wheels to carry things.
✔ Use a shower stool and hose sprayer in the bathtub.

Flu and Pneumonia

Many people with lung disease become sick during flu season, and the flu can lead to pneumonia. People with lung disease and their caregivers should always:

- Stay away from other people with colds or flu.
- Wash hands often and clean the telephone with antibacterial soap.
- Get a flu shot (pneumonia shots are also available).
- Contact the doctor as soon as they come down with the flu or a cold.

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Taking Care of Yourself— Stress Relief for You & the Care Receiver

Relaxation techniques are very helpful for people with chronic lung disease, and also for their caregivers. Here are some tips to help the person in your care and *you* relax—

- develop a regular habit of yoga, prayer, meditation, or listening to soothing music
- use your imagination to pretend you are on the beach or some other peaceful place; stay there until you feel calm
- slowly tense and then relax each part of your body, starting with your toes and working your way up. Remember to breathe while you do this exercise.

COPD Digest

For reliable information on COPD, get *COPD Digest* at www.copdfoundation.org

Inspiration

Don't let yesterday take up too much of today.

Live Life Laughing!

When you feed a dog, he thinks *you* are God.

When you feed a cat, he thinks *he* is God.

Memory Care - Agitation

Agitated behavior can start in the early stage of Alzheimer's and grows worse in the middle stage of the illness. The term "agitation" covers a group of different, but related, behaviors. Very mild agitation may seem like a personality change in which a person acts in ways that are uncharacteristic or inappropriate for him or her, such as being very stubborn, worried, or nervous. More severe agitation can be disruptive or even dangerous.

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Your donations are important part of offsetting the cost of the Caregiver Newsletter. If you would like to donate send donations to :

Herkimer County Office For the Aging
Caregiver Newsletter
109 Mary St, Suite 1101, Herkimer, NY 13350

Alzheimer's Support Group:

1)At FoltsBrook (Claxton) meets the second Tuesday of each month at 6pm in the Claxton Conference Room, 104 N Washington St, Herkimer. For additional information, call the Social Services Department at (315) 866-6964 ext 260.

2)Little Falls Community Center, 524 Main St. Meet the 2nd Thursday of the month at 6:00pm.

3) Weller Library, 41 W Main St, Mohawk. Meet the 1st & 3rd Wednesday of the month at 10:30am. Call Patricia at 315-269-5266 or 315-235-7143 to sign up.

Caregiving in The Comfort of Home®

Our Purpose

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

Ordering Info

From the publishers of

Caregiving in The Comfort of Home®
Caregiver Series

available from…
CareTrust Publications LLC
PO Box 10283, Portland, OR 97296
800-565-1533
or www.comfortofhome.com

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SAFETY TIPS– Quit Smoking!

Smoking causes 480,000 deaths per year. 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. FDA approved medications, nicotine gum, patches or lozenges are available that can help a person stop smoking. Sometimes even multiple medications may be needed. Eating a healthy diet, drinking plenty of water and juice, and taking vitamin supplements can make withdrawal easier and less uncomfortable.

People who smoke and have lung disease need extra support and encouragement from family members, friends, and caregivers so they can stop smoking. Professional counselors can also help. Activities should be planned that reduce depression and stress, which can make a person want to "light up." The Food and Drug Administration has not found any e-cigarette to be safe and effective in helping smokers quit. If smokers are ready to quit smoking for good, they should call 1-800-QUIT NOW or talk with their doctor about finding the best way to quit using proven methods and FDA-approved treatments and counseling. The **American Lung Association's Freedom From Smoking®** program is a proven way to quit smoking—and stay quit.

Source: COPD Foundation; American Lung Association

NEXT ISSUE… WANDERING WITH ALZHEIMER'S

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QUICK QUIZ

Even healthy people are conscious of lung disease because of the high rate of illness and death it can cause. Read the issue and answer True or False to questions below.

1. Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) is long-term blockage of air movement in the lungs.

T F

2. Mold generally doesn't bother people with COPD.

T F

3. Most people with COPD have both emphysema and chronic bronchitis.

T F

4. Most COPD is inherited.

T F

5. Relaxation techniques such as meditation, or tensing and relaxing muscle groups, are very helpful in relieving the stress that accompanies shortness of breath.

T F

6. Cigarette smoking is the leading cause of COPD.

T F

7. The first symptom of COPD is usually coughing that produces mucus, followed by shortness of breath after activities such as climbing the stairs.

T F

8. People with COPD may eventually get tired dressing and bathing, lose the ability to concentrate, and put strain on their heart because their lungs are not processing enough oxygen.

T F

9. Very mild agitation may seem like a personality change in which a person with Alzheimer's acts in ways that are uncharacteristic for him or her, such as being very stubborn, worried, or nervous.

T F

10. Many people with lung disease become sick during flu season, and the flu can lead to pneumonia.

T F

Name_____

Signature_____ Date_____

KEY: 1. T; 2. F; 3. T; 4. F; 5. T; 6. T; 7. T; 8. T; 9. T; 10. T

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