

# COPD Disease Management Newsletter

summer 2010

## COPD and the Weather

The strategic key in managing your Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) is to avoid aggravations if possible, such as extreme weather. Discuss preparation for weather extremes and changes with your COPD specialist ahead of time.

### Cold Weather

During the winter, cold air can trigger a reaction that constricts the airway and decreases air flow into the lungs. Frigid temperatures can fatigue COPD patients and make you feel more tired after you've been in the cold.

There are things you can do to reduce or minimize your lung's negative reactions to the cold weather. A warm, lightweight coat, like down, is a better option than a heavy winter coat which can wear you out with the weight. Try a long, warm scarf wrapped around to cover your nose so you breathe warm air from inside.

If you choose to keep warm with a wood stove, you should know that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) promotes models manufactured after 1980 with EPA-certified standards. These wood stoves give off less pollution, need less fuel, and need cleaning less often than older, non-certified wood stoves. According to the EPA, wood smoke can cause coughs, headaches and eye and throat irritation in otherwise healthy people and can interfere with normal lung development in infants and children. The American Lung Association warns that even short exposure to wood smoke can be dangerous if you have a vulnerable lung condition such as COPD.

### Hot Weather

In the summer, breathing dense, hot, humid air can create more resistance to airflow in the airway. Add smog to this mix and you have a potential flare-up waiting to happen.

Avoid or minimize your exposure to hot and humid air. Stay as active as possible indoors in an air-conditioned environment. Set the thermostat at a moderate temperature and make sure the filters have been cleaned and the unit is well-maintained.



If you can't afford an air-conditioning unit at home, or if you want to get out of the house, try spending time in nearby public buildings that are air-conditioned, such as libraries, museums, malls, grocery stores or movie theaters. Make sure that your car's air-conditioning is properly maintained.

If you are considering moving to a different part of the country with a different climate, discuss your move with your physician first. Try to visit the location during its "worst" season to see how your body and lungs respond to the climate conditions. Ideally, you should visit the location several times and during different seasons to see how the climate affects you before committing to the move.

Being prepared for extreme temperatures may take a little extra planning, but with the help of your physician, you should be able to navigate your way through the seasons.

Sources: American Lung Association, Canadian Lung Association, Environmental Protection Agency





## Boost Your Mood: Get a Positive Attitude *By Genea Yates*

Recently I found myself in a waiting room expecting the news from the doctor as he walked in after several hours of anticipation. Those hours could have been spent in dread, negativity or fear. I chose to take control of what I could – my attitude.

### What does your attitude do for you?

Does your attitude wear you out or give you energy? Would you want to consistently hear the statements you tell yourself and others? When was the last time a negative attitude held you back?

Recognize what you bring to the table. You may complain about the person who brought the dry turkey. But you may be the one who brought the nasty fruit salad. Attitude is defined as beliefs, feelings, values and dispositions to act in certain ways. In his book *10 Life Changing Steps to Turning Attitude into Action*, Keith Harrell describes the steps necessary to adjust your attitude.

- **Understand the power of attitude.** A positive attitude does more than help your outlook, it can also help you feel better and improve relationships.
- **Take charge of your life regardless of circumstances or setbacks.** Attitude is a choice not related to your circumstances. Hope looks past your circumstances and into the possibilities of what you may not see right now.
- **Identify what holds you back and what pushes you forward.** Find out what blocks you from getting where you want to be, and what you can do to change your attitude or your actions.
- **See things from a different perspective.** Negativity can contribute to clinical depression. A new perspective is not seeing things unrealistically, but gives you a new focus to see things that you may not have seen before.
- **Find your purpose and passion.** What do you enjoy? What do you base your worth on? Answering those questions helps you understand your purpose and passion. If you base your worth on someone else, your things or your circumstances, you'll only have short-term happiness. There may be a need to change what you value. Spend more time in what you enjoy.
- **Become proactive.** Think about how you will handle situations before they happen.
- **Know what motivates you.** What drives you to act differently?

- **Build supportive relationships.** Select people who will help you have a positive attitude. Spend less time with the people who wear you out.
- **Enjoy changes and opportunity.** Often those changes can lead to a positive result.
- **Know that life is bigger than just you.** Understand that everyone brings his or her own ideas and experiences. While your wants and needs are important, so are others'. Thinking beyond yourself and helping others often gives you an unexpected benefit.

Once those steps are considered, there are also other actions to take:

- **Avoid toxic people.** Surround yourself with people you enjoy and would like to be similar to.
- **Know the power of positive thinking.** Do you tell yourself more positive or negative things? Self talk can either bring you down or boost you up.
- **Use humor.** Laughter has the power to improve your immune system, aid in breathing and change your attitude.
- **Let go of baggage.** Baggage is a result of past experiences, and what you've been taught to believe.
- **Live a healthy life.** Exercise and good nutrition help keep life balanced. Exercise releases "happy hormones," known as endorphins, which improve your mood. According to the Surgeon General, regular exercise can help you feel happier and prevent depression. Pay attention to the foods you eat. Try to eat foods such as whole grains, fruits, and dark leafy green vegetables, which improve your mood – and increase your energy.

### Take time to think

In that hospital waiting room, I looked around and realized perhaps everyone needed something outside of their circumstances, as did I. With hope, thinking outside of my circumstances made those hours more manageable.

You carry your attitude with you everywhere. The power of your thoughts can add to your joy or deplete your energy. Is your cup overflowing or emptied?

Genea Yates is a native of Mississippi, Genea has worked with Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) for 11 years. She's currently working as a Clinical Advisor and Marriage & Family Therapist for Humana EAP. Genea earned a Bachelor's Degree in Social & Rehabilitation Services and a Master's Degree in Marriage & Family Therapy from the University of Southern Mississippi.

## Understanding COPD Treatments

After receiving a diagnosis of COPD, you and your doctor will have plenty to discuss regarding treatment choices, but research shows you should probably not take too long to make those decisions. While researchers agree there is still no cure for COPD, the latest studies show that starting treatment early may slow the progression of the illness and add years to the lives of patients.

Preparing ahead of time for your COPD treatment discussion with your doctor can help you make informed decisions and may save time in getting started. The following information is an overview to help you prepare.

### Medications

Learn about the variety of COPD medications available as there is no "best" medicine or "one size fits all" treatment for everyone. Each person's COPD is unique, and based on your symptoms and needs, you and your health team should work on a treatment plan that is right for you. The right medicine at the right time can help with fewer flare-ups and general management of your life.

### Pulmonary Rehabilitation

Pulmonary rehabilitation programs offer substantial benefits in

improving lung function, reducing symptoms and improving quality of life for persons with chronic lung disease. By educating patients on exercise and their condition, the patient will understand their lungs, as well as how to effectively manage their breath.

### Supplemental Oxygen

Sometimes with COPD, reduced lung function will affect the cells that produce energy from the interaction of oxygen with food. This energy is used to do everything from breathing, to carrying out bodily functions, to every day tasks. Supplemental oxygen may be needed to enhance the energy and stamina levels for the patient. Oxygen can also improve sleep, enhance mood and increase mental alertness.

### Nutrition

Because your body uses food as fuel for all of its activities, it should not be a surprise that food choices can affect breathing. The right mix of nutrients in a diet can help make breathing easier. A balanced diet will supply all the nutrients you need because no single food can supply what a body needs. A diet with the amount of calories your body needs will give you energy to help you do the things you want to do. Your body may be using more

calories than you think. A person with COPD can burn 10 times as many calories breathing as a healthy person does. Some people with COPD find that they lose weight without trying and others find they become overweight easily. Did you know there are nutritionists that actually specialize in COPD? Work with all your health team to decide on a food plan you can live with.

### Protecting Your Health

A person with COPD is affected by a respiratory infection much more than a person with healthy lungs. Guard your general health by washing your hands more often, using hand sanitizer, getting a flu shot, avoiding crowds during the cold and flu season, and practicing good oral hygiene (germs in your mouth can lead to infections). Most importantly, if you use tobacco products, ask your doctor for help in quitting.

Saving valuable time with "educated" questions will get you on the road to COPD management much quicker and will produce better results.

Sources: Medline Plus and American Lung Association



**Health Information Audio Library**  
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**7 days a week at: 877-217-7946**

**Health and Wellness web site:**  
**[www.humana-military.com](http://www.humana-military.com)**

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## Sleep Problems and COPD

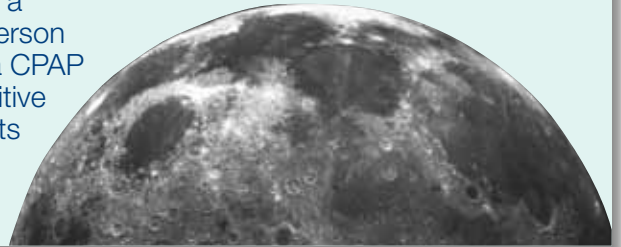
Many COPD patients complain of sleeping poorly. The American Thoracic Society reports patients with COPD have a higher prevalence of insomnia, nightmares and daytime sleepiness than the general population. This problem can be due to either the lung disease itself or the adverse effects of drug therapy.

While it is obvious that lack of sleep can affect one's quality of life, researchers are struggling to find an answer to solve the problem. The American Lung Association is testing a new device called transnasal insufflation. A nasal tube delivers **warm, humidified air** at a high flow rate while the person sleeps. This differs from a CPAP machine (continuous positive airway pressure) that treats sleep apnea (a sleep disorder characterized

by pauses in breathing during sleep) by delivering a stream of **compressed air** through the nasal passages. Early test results suggest the transnasal insufflation device can improve COPD patients' breathing during sleep by applying a small amount of air pressure to the back of the throat. If the sleep lab studies continue to be successful, the American Lung Association hopes these machines will become available for home use in the near future.

If you are having difficulty sleeping and are struggling with fatigue, check with your physician.

Sources: American Lung Association and American Thoracic Society



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