



COPD-the silent thief of air...

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Have you ever tried to exercise while trying to breathe through a drinking straw? That is how breathing feels when you have COPD, or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. COPD is the 4th leading cause of death in the United States and the second leading cause of disability. There are 12 million Americans who have been diagnosed with COPD and there is believed to be an additional 12 million who don't even know they have it.

COPD is an umbrella term that includes chronic bronchitis and emphysema. Damage to the lungs causes problems moving stale air out of the lungs. Most patients have a combination of symptoms associated with both chronic bronchitis and emphysema. Chronic bronchitis is an ongoing problem with inflammation in the lungs. When the lungs are inflamed, they overproduce mucus which clogs up the airways even more. Chronic bronchitis is often defined as a cough that is productive most days during 2-3 months out of the year for 2 consecutive years.

At the end of your airways there is an average of 300-500 million air sacs called alveoli in each lung. These little air sacs form grape-like clusters surrounded by a dense network of capillaries. This is where gas exchange takes place in the lungs, taking in oxygen and getting rid of carbon dioxide with each breath that is taken. With emphysema, these air sacs can lose their elasticity, be over-inflated, or destroyed completely. Shortness of breath - or feeling winded - is the most common symptom and it's often only noticed with exertion. It is important to know the major symptoms of COPD:

- shortness of breath
- cough
- wheezing
- fatigue

These symptoms can be signs of many things, and people often feel they have just gotten out of shape or that they are signs of aging.



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Wondering what to do?

1. Talk to your doctor and get screened. Spirometry is a simple test that measures how much air you can force out of your lungs quickly. It's important to ***know your numbers***. Early diagnosis of lung disease is key in learning to manage your life. The doctor will also consider other factors, such as occupational exposures, family history and any other health problems. Although smoking is the leading cause of COPD, it isn't the only one, so a complete health history is necessary.
2. If you smoke, QUIT. Experts believe smoking as little as 100 cigarettes in a lifetime increases your risk of lung disease. People often say the damage from smoking is already done, so why quit? Although there may be some truth to that, continued smoking has been shown to continue damaging the lungs further, increasing symptoms, decreasing quality of life, and shortening life expectancy.
3. Take medications as prescribed. There are medications available to help control your symptoms. Correct use is important, especially with the various types of inhalers available today.
4. Eat well. Sleep well. And get moving!

COPD patients can be underweight or overweight and both pose risks. Sleep disorders, along with other diseases, can cause increased problems with COPD patients. These issues can be addressed by a healthcare provider.

Exercise can be scary for someone with COPD. Exertion causes increased breathlessness, so the thought of increasing activity is a challenge for COPD patients. Pulmonary rehabilitation is a program for patients with moderate to severe COPD. Patients attend pulmonary rehab in an outpatient setting to learn about disease management and to increase their strength and endurance. Pulmonary rehabilitation can be a rewarding experience for patients as they build confidence in their ability to control symptoms and begin to enjoy activities previously given up.

1. Take an active role in your healthcare.
2. Discuss your symptoms with your doctor and request a simple Spirometry test.
3. COPD is a chronic condition, but it is manageable. You CAN breathe easier.



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If you have further questions about COPD or lung disease, call Midwest Therapy's Pulmonary Rehab Specialists at 309-762-6676 or 563-326-1400. We are proud that our pulmonary rehabilitation program has been certified by the American Association of Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Rehabilitation (AACVPR). Our team is experienced, enthusiastic, and has been recognized for our commitment to improving the quality of life by enhancing standards of patient care. We are waiting to assist you with convenient locations at:

- 4360 7th Street in Moline
- 2035 Bridge Avenue in Davenport
- and coming soon to 3740 Utica Ridge in Bettendorf in January 2012

Midwest Therapy Centers is a Division of Braaten Health LLC, serving the Quad City Area for more than 10 years. Remember: It's *Your **Life.** Your **Health.** Your **Choice.***