

COPD: THE FACTS

DEFINITION

- COPD, or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, is a serious lung disease that robs people of their ability to breathe.
- Both types of COPD – chronic bronchitis and emphysema – make it harder to breathe because less air is able to flow in and out of the lungs.
- Chronic bronchitis causes the lining of the lungs' airways to be inflamed, which makes the airways tighten and narrow.
- Emphysema causes the air sacs in the lungs to become damaged so old air inside the air sacs cannot be exchanged with new air.

SCOPE

- Approximately 24 million Americans have some form of COPD.
- Half of people who have COPD don't know it and remain undiagnosed (12 million).
- COPD is the fourth leading cause of death in the U.S., taking one life every four minutes.
- COPD is the only leading cause of death that is increasing in prevalence.
- COPD kills more people each year than breast cancer and diabetes combined.
- COPD accounts for more than \$40 billion in total health care costs to the nation.
- Women are at increasingly high risk for COPD, as the death rate is growing faster among women with COPD than men.

IMPORTANCE OF EARLY DIAGNOSIS

- COPD develops slowly and worsens over time; lung function can decline without people even realizing it, and it can take many years before they start feeling its impact.
- Many patients are not diagnosed until they have lost half their lung function, are hospitalized, or require emergency care to treat the disease.
- As COPD progresses, symptoms tend to get worse and more damage occurs in the lungs.
- Lung damage is not reversible, but it is treatable when managed with a doctor.

SYMPTOMS

- Common symptoms of COPD include coughing, with or without mucus/phlegm, shortness of breath, wheezing and chest tightness.
- Breathing gradually becomes more difficult for people with COPD until they feel like they are inhaling and exhaling through a small straw.
- COPD symptoms are often confused with normal signs of aging.

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EASE OF SCREENING

- A brief, five-question screener is available to help people find out if they are at risk for COPD.
- The screener was designed by a clinical working group of 10 pulmonologists and primary care physicians and validated in a study of nearly 700 patients.
- The screener is available at DRIVE4COPD.com.
- People who take the screener should discuss the results with their doctor.

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL IMPACT

- Many people with COPD avoid activities that they used to enjoy because they become short of breath more easily, which can keep them isolated.
- The emotional trauma of COPD can be debilitating and many COPD patients can feel depressed.
- Studies have shown that compared to men, women with COPD report more depression and a lower health-related quality of life.
- COPD changes not only the life of the diagnosed person, but also of surrounding family and friends.

MANAGEMENT

- COPD can be managed with a doctor to help people live and breathe easier.
- Even when people are diagnosed with COPD, only half of them are prescribed treatment.
- The earlier people get diagnosed and talk to their doctor, the better off they will be.
- Based on one's symptoms and a test of his/her breathing (spirometry), a doctor will be able to diagnose and tell how severe one's COPD is and what treatments are best.
- Patients diagnosed with COPD should work with a doctor to find a treatment plan that works for them.
- Lifestyle changes, like staying active and quitting smoking, and respiratory rehabilitation programs can help.

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