



# Breathing Easy Outlook

STAYING HEALTHY ■ LIVING WELL

FALL 2008

## Exercise Does Your Body Good

Does having chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) limit your ability to work, do household chores, or be involved in your favorite social activities? One way to make these things easier is to get regular exercise.

### Feel the Benefits

Regular exercise can give you more energy and help your heart and lungs work more efficiently. Over time, exercise may reduce

shortness of breath. It also:

- Strengthens bones and arm and leg muscles
- Lowers the risk for heart disease
- Helps manage high blood pressure and blood sugar
- Helps you relax
- Improves sleep and mood

### Types of Exercise

Two kinds of exercise are helpful for people with COPD: aerobic

exercise (such as walking) and muscle-strengthening activities (such as lifting light weights).

With better aerobic fitness, you'll be able to walk farther and do more activities without becoming breathless. Having stronger muscles will help you move, push, and carry things with less effort. Just be sure to talk with your health care provider before starting a new exercise routine.



### Do I Need Oxygen Therapy?

Feeling tired and short of breath is a difficult part of having COPD. When you can't get enough oxygen on your own, oxygen therapy can be very useful. It can help you feel more like your normal self by allowing you to do more and sleep better.

Some signs that you might need oxygen therapy include:

- Shortness of breath
- Feeling irritable
- Waking up with a headache

Shortness of breath alone isn't a good indicator that you need oxygen therapy. Your health care provider may want to test how much oxygen is in your blood. That's done by drawing blood for an arterial blood gas test or by using an oximeter, a small device that's placed on your finger. If the oxygen level in your blood is too low, you may need extra oxygen at least some of the time. Together with your provider, you can determine whether you need it all the time or just during sleep or exercise.

## 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 health care provider 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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## Breathe Clean Air AT HOME

You may not realize that the air inside your home—just like the air outside—can be polluted. That can be an issue for people with COPD because breathing unhealthy air places an extra burden on the lungs.

In a study published in the *American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine* in September 2007, researchers tested the homes of people with COPD and found that unhealthy indoor air was common. And people whose homes had the highest levels of air pollutants had the most severe COPD symptoms. When your lungs are already working hard, it makes sense to keep the air in your home as healthy as possible.

### Common Sources of Indoor Air Pollution

There are many sources of pollutants inside homes and buildings. Tobacco smoke, byproducts from gas or kerosene stoves and heaters, building materials made of pressed wood products, pesticides, and cleaning products all contribute. Most homes also have mold, dust, pollen, and animal dander floating around. All these substances may harm people with lung conditions.

Here are three culprits you can keep in check so that the air in your home is healthier:

**Tobacco smoke.** One of the biggest sources of indoor air pollution is cigarette and cigar smoke. Even if you don't smoke, smoke from someone else's cigarette is a serious concern. A burning cigarette produces large amounts of microscopic particles that linger in the air. When they're breathed in, the particles go deep into the lung tissue and cause damage. Ask family members and visitors not to smoke in your house.



**Stoves and heaters.** Gas and kerosene stoves and space heaters release harmful particles into the air. So do wood-burning fireplaces and woodstoves. Be sure gas stoves and fireplaces are properly vented to the outside. If you use a non-vented gas or kerosene space heater, always keep doors to that room open to the rest of the house and open a window. When using a gas cooktop, turn on the exhaust fan.

**Household products.** Aerosol sprays, glues and adhesives, paints, varnishes, disinfectants, and some cleaning products release harmful organic compounds. Follow the safety precautions on the label. Use these products outside or in a well-ventilated area.

### Air Out Your Home

Ventilating your house can help clear the air, too. Open windows and doors when the weather is warm. Portable and whole-house heat recovery ventilators that exhaust stale air and bring in fresh air can also improve indoor air quality.

Don't let irritating substances in the air make your symptoms worse. With healthy indoor air, you can give your lungs a break.

## Protect Your Bones Against Osteoporosis



**Taking steps to protect bone health is important for everyone, but especially for those with chronic lung disease. Between 36 and 60 percent of people with COPD develop osteoporosis, a condition in which the bones become porous and brittle and break easily. This weakening of bones is painless and happens slowly over many years. But once bones become weak, a sudden fall or strain can cause a break, often in a vertebra, wrist, or hip bone. A break can be painful and disabling—and it can have a big impact on your ability to get around and take care of yourself.**

### **What Causes Bone Loss?**

There are several reasons why people with COPD are more likely to develop porous bones. Bone loss can be the result of:

- Smoking, which leads to significant bone loss
- Spending more time sitting and less time being active
- Being underweight. Bones are stimulated to stay strong when they have a heavier load to carry.
- Having low blood levels of vitamin D from a lack of exposure to sunlight. This vitamin works together with calcium to maintain strong bones.
- Using inhaled and oral steroids. Although they are a key part of managing COPD, using them increases the risk of developing osteoporosis.

You might have the impression that weak bones are just a problem for women, but men have reason to be concerned, too. Studies show that men with COPD have lower bone density in their hips and spine, and men with chronic lung disease are five times more likely to have osteoporosis than men without lung disease.

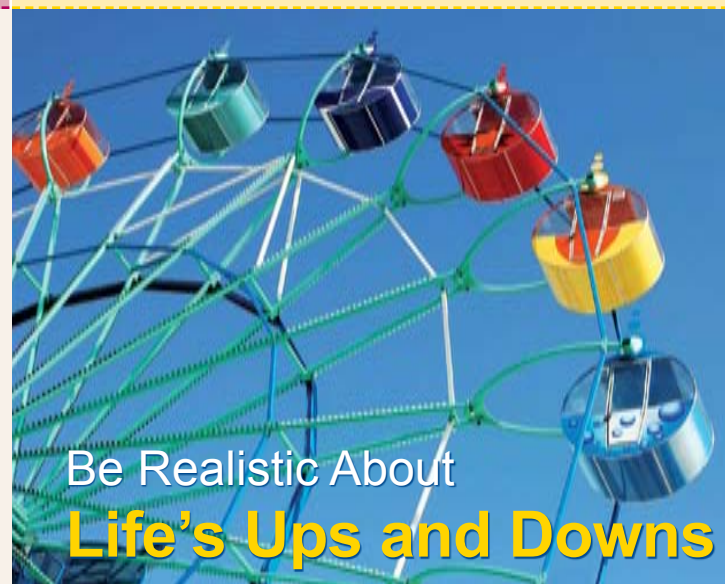
## Bone Do's and Don'ts

The news isn't all bad—you can do a lot to support your bones. First, ask your health care provider if you need a bone mineral density test. This safe, painless test takes only 15 minutes or less to perform. If your bone density is low, your provider may suggest you take medication that can help prevent or slow bone loss.

You can support your bones by taking these steps, too:

- **DO get regular exercise.** Walking and climbing stairs are examples of weight-bearing exercise. This type of exercise strengthens bones by making them work against gravity to support your weight. Muscle-strengthening activities also help, such as lifting weights or using weight machines. Tai chi, yoga, and stretching are great for improving balance and flexibility, which helps prevent falls.
- **DON'T smoke.** Smoking weakens bones. Quitting isn't easy, but it's one of the best things you can do for your bones.
- **DO get enough vitamin D, calcium, and protein.** Your body uses calcium and protein every day to build new bone. Vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium. You can get it from sunlight, fortified foods, or a vitamin supplement.
- **DON'T drink too much alcohol or consume too much sodium.** Alcohol may damage bones, and too much sodium leads to greater loss of calcium in the urine.
- **DO prevent falls, a major cause of broken bones.** To avoid a slip or stumble at home, get rid of clutter, move electrical cords out of the way, and tack down rugs or use ones with a nonslip backing. Make sure rooms are well-lit. It's easy to slip in bathrooms, so install grab bars by the shower, tub, and toilet.

Your bones support you day in and day out. By taking these steps, you can return the favor.



## Be Realistic About Life's Ups and Downs

Moving toward better health can feel like riding a roller coaster. That's because most people tend to slip back into old patterns as they try to change habits. So it helps to expect and plan for hitches along the way.

### Setbacks Don't Mean Failure

The difference between a setback and failure relates to where you are on your journey toward wellness. For example, are you serious about taking action? Or are you still deciding whether change is what you want? It also matters how you plan for change. The more detailed and realistic your plan, the better your chance for success.

Those who focus only on their ultimate goal tend to get discouraged when they don't achieve perfection. They may not recognize small successes along the way. Those small accomplishments can help you build confidence and stay—or get back—on course.

### Make a Plan You Can Stick With

To give yourself the best chance of success, make a plan and set achievable goals. By striving for one big goal (such as to quit smoking forever), if you lapse once, you will have already failed. Instead, set smaller goals and mark progress along the way. Put your goals in writing and ask for help from your health care team or a support group of people facing the same issues. And if you need inspiration, take a few minutes to review the benefits of a healthier you.



### Arterial blood gas test.

A test that is used to measure the amount of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the blood to see whether they're in balance. During this test, a blood sample is taken from an artery in the wrist. It is usually done in the hospital.

**Pulse oximetry.** A test that is used to monitor the level of oxygen in the tissues. During this test, a small sensor called a pulse oximeter is clipped to the end of a finger or earlobe.

**Tai chi.** A form of exercise that originated in China. It involves a series of slow, gentle, and flowing movements. Tai chi promotes relaxation and improves balance.

**Yoga.** A type of mind/body exercise that involves gentle stretching and controlled breathing. Practicing this form of exercise helps to improve flexibility, strength, and balance.

## Use Your Inhalers the Right Way

When you use an inhaler, do you feel like you're all thumbs? Inhaled medication is a big part of treating COPD and preventing flare-ups. However, inhalers can be tricky to use. If not used correctly, the medication may not reach your lungs where it's needed. So take a few minutes to review these steps and talk with your health care provider to make sure you're doing it right.

### How to Use a Metered-Dose Inhaler (MDI)

To use your MDI, follow these steps:

1. Remove the cap, hold the container upright, and shake it well.
2. Tilt your head back slightly and breathe out slowly to empty your lungs.
3. Hold the inhaler between your teeth and close your lips around the mouthpiece. Begin breathing in slowly as you press the inhaler once. (If using a spacer, put the spacer mouthpiece in your mouth, press the inhaler once, then begin breathing in slowly.)
4. Hold your breath for 10 seconds, then breathe normally.
5. If your instructions are to take two puffs, you need to wait a minute or two before taking the second one. Check the medication's instructions.



Many people find it hard to coordinate breathing in while pressing the inhaler. Using a spacer or holding chamber makes this easier because it holds the mist, giving you more time to breathe it in.

### How to Use a Dry Powder Inhaler (DPI)

Some DPIs come with the medication inside. With others, you unwrap a capsule and place it in the device. Spacers are not needed with DPIs. These tips can help you better use your inhaler:

- If the DPI uses a separate packet of medicine, open it just before you are ready to use the inhaler.
- To avoid blowing the medication away, don't breathe into the device.
- After exhaling, put the mouthpiece in your mouth, close your lips, and breathe in quickly and deeply.

Be sure to read and reread the instructions for your inhaler. If you're not sure whether you're using it correctly, play it safe and check with your health care provider or pharmacist.

## Take a *Pass* on Gas

Did you know that most people produce 1 to 4 pints of intestinal gas a day? If you've ever felt gassy and bloated after eating, you know that having too much gas is uncomfortable. It also makes breathing more difficult—a particular concern for people with COPD.

### What's the Deal with Gas?

One way gas gets into the stomach is by swallowing air. When you're under stress or eat and drink quickly, it's easier to swallow air. Some people swallow air when they smoke or chew gum. Loose or poorly fitting dentures also contribute.

Gas is also produced in the intestines when harmless bacteria that live there break down food. Some foods are more likely than others to produce gas.

### How to Find Relief

Here are some ways you can find relief from gas:

- Relax when you eat, and eat slowly.
- Use a digestive aid that reduces gas from beans.
- Use a lactase supplement if milk products cause gas.
- Avoid fatty foods, which slow digestion.
- Avoid chewing gum or sucking on hard candy.
- Visit your dentist if your dentures don't fit properly.

Try to avoid the foods that cause gas. If you're still bothered by it, see your health care provider for help.

### Beware of These Gas Producers

Not everyone gets gas from the same foods, but these can be to blame:

- Artichokes
- Asparagus
- Cabbage
- Cauliflower
- Broccoli
- Brussels sprouts
- Dried beans
- Oat bran
- Onions
- Soft drinks and other carbonated beverages
- Sorbitol (a sweetener found in sugar-free foods, including gum and candy)



### Sunshine Rice *Serves four*

#### Ingredients

- 1½ tbsp. vegetable oil
- 1¼ cup finely chopped celery with leaves
- 1½ cup finely chopped onion
- 1 cup water
- ½ cup orange juice
- 2 tbsp. lemon juice
- 1 dash hot sauce
- 1 cup long-grain white rice, uncooked
- ¼ cup slivered almonds

#### Directions

Heat oil in medium saucepan. Add celery and onions and sauté until tender, about 10 minutes. Add water, juices, and hot sauce. Bring to a boil. Stir in rice and bring back to a boil. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer for 20 minutes or until rice is tender and liquid has been absorbed. Stir in almonds. Serve immediately as a side dish for an entrée.

#### Per Serving

Calories 182, Total fat 7 g (Saturated fat <1 g), Cholesterol 0 mg, Sodium 21 mg

This recipe is from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute/National Institutes of Health.

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