

November is COPD Awareness Month Time To Ask Yourself the Question: How Healthy Are Your Lungs?

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COPD stands for Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease. It is a condition in the lungs that affects primarily smokers and former smokers, but can affect non-smokers as well. There are approximately 13.5 million people in the U.S. with COPD, but it has been estimated that there are an additional 16 million who have the disease but are undiagnosed.

The primary symptoms include shortness of breath, chronic cough with sputum production, and intermittent wheezing. The diagnosis should be confirmed by the presence of significant airway obstruction on pulmonary function testing.

The treatment of COPD is centered on three main tenants: reduction of risk factors, management of stable COPD, and treatment of exacerbations. Smoking cessation is the most important thing a person can do for their overall health, but breaking the addiction can be the biggest challenge in a person's life. Luckily, there are several new therapies and medications that can help a person to successfully quit. Avoidance of other indoor and outdoor pollution and appropriate respiratory vaccination is also important.

The symptoms of stable COPD including shortness of breath and cough can be significantly improved with appropriate use of inhaled medication and the use of oxygen therapy when indicated. Also, the beneficial effects of exercise cannot be over emphasized.

The Pulmonary Rehabilitation Program at Fort Walton Beach Medical Center offers regular exercise geared toward improving symptoms of breathlessness, education in diet and breathing techniques and camaraderie with other COPD patients

The last tenant of COPD management is the treatment of exacerbations. An exacerbation occurs when the person experiences increase in cough, increase in shortness of breath and increased sputum production or change in color of sputum. Treatment of a COPD exacerbation consists of increased inhaled bronchodilator medications, corticosteroids and often times antibiotics.

Each person has a unique medical history. Therefore, it is essential to talk with your primary care physician or a Pulmonologist about your personal risk factors and/or experience with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. By talking openly and regularly with your healthcare provider, you can take an active role in your care.

For more information about the risk, symptoms, diagnosing and treatments for COPD visit Fort Walton Beach Medical Center's website at www.fwbmc.com and click on COPD under the heading Health Conditions on the right side or our web page.

Stroke by Numbers

Did you know.....

20% of Women in the United States will die from stroke

28% of stroke sufferers are under the age of 65

45 is the age at and after which the risk of stroke for women is greater than the risk of heart attack

53 seconds indicates the average frequency of stroke occurrence

700,000 is the number of strokes in the United States per year

Do you know your risk factors for stroke? There are several things that put you at risk for a stroke. Modifiable risk factors are those that you can change including: obesity, poor diet, lack of exercise, smoking or tobacco use, excessive alcohol intake and illegal drug use. There are also risk factors that you can modify by medication control including: high blood pressure, diabetes or high blood sugar, high cholesterol or triglyceride levels. Non-modifiable risk factors are those that you cannot change such as age, gender, race, heredity or family history, and prior history of a stroke. Take the time to evaluate if you are at risk and discuss them with your doctor because the numbers of stroke are life changing. Remember to think F.A.S.T.: F = facial droop, A = arm drift or inability to raise, S = slurred speech and T = time to call 911.

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