Coping with Spring Allergies and COPD

Ah, spring. Most people welcome its arrival. But the future might not look so rosy if you have allergies. Warmer temps bring blooming things—and more pollen and other allergens. For many people, that means sneezing, itchy, watery eyes, and other seasonal symptoms. Coping with springtime is important for anyone who’s allergic, including people who also have chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). With COPD, lung disease already makes you feel short of breath. And some things you breathe in can cause a COPD flare-up, which makes it even harder to breathe. Experts say allergies can sometimes aggravate COPD. If that happens, some of your usual symptoms—like breathlessness, coughing, or tiredness—could get worse.

TAKE CONTROL

If allergies are bothering you, ask your doctor what you can do to feel better. Anytime your COPD symptoms get worse, let your doctor know. In some cases, you may need to see an allergist to find out if allergens are the problem. The American College of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology (and other experts) offer these steps:

> Keep your car and home windows closed so allergens can't get in. If you need to cool off and you have an air conditioner, run it rather than opening the windows.
> Ask someone to help you do a thorough spring cleaning of your home to get rid of any allergens that may have settled in over the winter. This includes vacuuming, wiping down upholstery, and removing any mold from damp areas.
> Try to stay indoors when a lot of pollen is in the air. Warm, windy days can trigger high pollen levels.
Serve Up Better Breathing

Did you know that what you eat may help you breathe better with COPD?

The right diet can supply the extra energy you need in order to breathe. A healthy diet can also help you maintain the muscles your body uses to breathe. Plus, eating well can help you fend off infections—a serious complication of COPD.

WHAT SHOULD I EAT?

A well-balanced diet, with the right mix of nutrients, is key. You’ll also want to avoid being over- or underweight, which can affect breathing too. Your doctor can help you create a meal plan that’s best for you. In the meantime, these tips may help:

> Your diet should include fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Limit simple carbs, like those in cakes, sweets, and sodas. Be sure to include plenty of proteins, such as lean meat, fish, eggs, low-fat milk, nuts, and beans.

> If you need to gain weight, increase the calories in your diet by adding extra unsaturated fats. Try munching on nuts or peanut butter and mixing olive or canola oil into meals.

> If you feel too tired to eat, try resting just before a meal. You might also want to eat earlier in the day when you may have more energy.

> Eat several smaller meals. Smaller meals use less oxygen to digest.

> Avoid foods that cause bloating and gas, such as cabbage, onions, and broccoli.

> Drink plenty of fluids before and after meals. This will help keep mucus thin so it’s easier to get out of your lungs. Be careful about the quantity of liquids you drink with meals, as they may make you feel too full to eat.

Sources: American Lung Association; COPD Foundation

Pharmacy Corner

Do you have difficulty using your inhaler with a spacer? Here is a link with video instructions to help you use your spacer properly. Please refer to the instructions that came with your spacer or inhaler for proper use of your particular brand of inhaler. Visit the URL listed below or visit selecthealth.org/newsletters and use the link in the COPD newsletter:

healthjourneysupport.com/respiratory/using-an-mdi_with_spacer
Trouble Paying for Meds? Reach Out for Options

When it’s hard to pay for prescription medication, it may be tempting to take a lower dose or even stop taking it all together. But if you have a chronic health problem, that can be trouble. It may cause a serious complication—or even a trip to the emergency room.

But there are better options. First, tell your doctor you can’t afford your medication. He or she may be able to switch your prescription to a generic drug or a less expensive brand-name medication. Your doctor may also be able to give you some free samples of your medication.

OTHER HELP
These resources may also help you afford your medication:

> **RxAssist** (rxassist.org) also provides a directory of programs that help with healthcare costs, including those for prescription drugs and medication copays. You can also find information about drug discount cards here.

> **Partnership for Prescription Assistance** (pparx.org) matches you with prescription assistance programs you may be eligible for. It draws from a database of more than 475 programs.

> **RxHope** (rxhope.org) provides descriptions of and downloadable applications for prescription assistance programs for specific medications. Members may also use the Intermountain Medication Assistance Program by emailing rximap@mail.org or calling 801-284-1118.

The Hidden Harm in E-Cigarettes

Did you set a New Year’s resolution to quit smoking? Don’t turn to e-cigarettes! Remember that although e-cigarettes are often viewed as less harmful than conventional cigarettes, the nicotine in e-cigarettes has several negative side effects:

1. Nicotine increases heart rate and blood pressure and may lead to changes in the brain that increase the risk of addiction to other drugs.

2. Many liquids found in e-cigarettes have candy and fruit flavoring and may lead to accidental ingestion by kids.

3. Diacetyl, a chemical often found in e-cigarettes, is associated with other lung diseases that can permanently damage the bronchioles, or smallest airways, in the lungs.

4. High-wattage vaporizers may also cause a build-up of formaldehyde and other toxins.

[link to health article]
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