COPD flare-ups (or exacerbations) are a leading cause of hospitalization among those living with COPD. A COPD flare-up can be scary for both the person living with COPD and his or her caregiver. Sometimes COPD flare-ups can be minor, but they also can be severe. Therefore, it is important to know how to prevent a COPD flare-up, prepare for a flare-up, and respond to a flare-up.

**Signs of a COPD flare-up**
It is important to know how to recognize the signs of a COPD flare-up. These are some things to look for:

- An ongoing or more severe cough;
- A cough that produces a lot of mucus;
- Increased shortness of breath, especially with physical activity or when resting;
- Wheezing, whistling or squeaky sound when breathing;
- Chest tightness; and,
- Cold or flu-like symptoms.
Registration is now open for Respiratory Health Association’s 15th annual Living Better Together COPD Conference being held on Thursday, November 15, 2018 at Meridian Banquets and Conference Center in Rolling Meadows, Illinois.

Designed specifically for people living with COPD, their families and caregivers, the Living Better Together COPD Conference helps individuals become educated consumers of health care and effective managers of their disease. We offer bus transportation from locations throughout Chicagoland and onsite supplemental oxygen for individuals already prescribed and using oxygen.

This year participants will enjoy a variety of sessions, including a moderated keynote, “Living Everyday with COPD.” Panelists Ravi Kalhan, MD and Harvey Wolf, PsyD will offer practical tips for living well.

To register for this event, visit resphealth.org/specialevents/living-better-together-copd-conference and download the registration form.

Please contact Jennifer at (312) 628-0219 or JKustwin@resphealth.org with questions.
Know how to prevent a COPD flare-up

Early detection is important. Be aware of the signs and symptoms listed on page one and call your doctor at the first sign of a change to your baseline health.

You should also:

- Get the proper vaccines (e.g., flu and pneumonia vaccines);
- Avoid others that are sick, when able;
- Practice good hand washing;
- Speak with your doctor about proper nutrition and pulmonary rehabilitation; and,
- Seek out information to help you or your loved one stop smoking (reminder: secondhand smoke is also very dangerous for someone living with COPD).

Know how to prepare for a flare-up

Even with the best prevention practices, a flare-up may still occur. Being prepared for a flare-up will help you and your caregivers know what to do in the event one occurs:

- Speak with your health care provider to determine the best medications for a flare-up;
- Know what triggers your COPD symptoms and how to best avoid them (e.g. make your home smoke-free, treat allergies, etc.);
- Keep your medication lists current and on hand at all times;
- Know the locations of emergency rooms or urgent care facilities and identify someone to serve as your Power Health Care of Attorney (POA) if you become incapacitated; and,
- Prepare your home with a stock of food, water, medications and medical device supplies.

Know how to respond to a flare-up

If you are experiencing a COPD emergency, which may include symptoms such as fast or irregular heartbeat, difficulty walking or talking, breathing fast and hard, call 911 immediately!

- Develop a COPD action plan with your health care provider and share it with your caregivers;
- Track and review signs and symptoms of a flare-up; identify when a symptom is not normal or may be an emergency (i.e., chest pain, fever, shortness of breath not subsiding with rest, etc.);
- Communicate your symptoms with caregivers; and,
- Contact your doctor when symptoms are not normal.

Visit Respiratory Health Association’s online library to find support resources:
RESPHEALTH.ORG/LIBRARY
RHA RECEIVES FUNDING TO HELP COPD PATIENTS AND FAMILY CAREGIVERS

Respiratory Health Association (RHA) was recently awarded funding to distribute a limited number of copies of its most recent COPD Resource, *The COPD Caregiver’s Toolkit*. The award was one of just six such awards nationwide, and is part of the federal National Heart, Lung, Blood Institute’s COPD Learn More Breathe Better® program. The Learn More Breathe Better program seeks to reduce the burden of COPD nationwide.

RHA identified a significant gap in educational and support resources dedicated to COPD caregivers. COPD caregivers are often underprepared for the range of roles and tasks required in tending to a family member or friend with COPD. In response, RHA developed *The COPD Caregiver’s Toolkit*, a comprehensive resource based on input from caregivers, patients and health care providers.

With this award, RHA will disseminate approximately 300 copies of *The COPD Caregiver’s Toolkit* through health care providers in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin in an effort to reduce the burden of COPD and improve disease treatment and management.

Visit [https://www.resphealth.org/copd-caregivers-toolkit](https://www.resphealth.org/copd-caregivers-toolkit) to learn more about the NHLBI community partner subcontractor program.
RHA spoke with Dr. Hensing to address the common questions that people living with COPD and their caregivers may have regarding lung cancer screening.

“Why is lung cancer screening important for someone living with COPD?”
Screening for lung cancer is a tool which has been shown to improve the likelihood of surviving a lung cancer diagnosis in individuals who are at increased risk based on significant prior tobacco exposure, a common complication of COPD. By finding lung cancer before it has spread, lung cancer screening has the potential to improve both the length and overall quality of life of individuals living with COPD by connecting them early to appropriate medical treatment options.

“How do I know if I should have lung cancer screening?”
The decision to proceed with lung cancer screening should be a shared decision between patient and health care provider based on patient history and risk. This will ensure that the individual who may benefit from screening understands both the potential benefits, as well as the risks before they proceed with the screening evaluation. Importantly, lung cancer screening should be conducted at centers with an established lung cancer screening program.

Dr. Hensing encourages all individuals living with COPD to have a conversation with their health care providers to determine if lung cancer screening is right for them. Your health care provider will also help locate an established lung cancer screening center that provides a comprehensive approach to care with proper evaluation by a team of providers.

“What can I expect if I need lung cancer screening?”
Lung cancer screening entails a low-dose (radiation) scan of the chest called a Computerized Axial Tomography (CAT) Scan. Additional tests may be required depending on the results of the initial scan.

Dr. Hensing emphasized that lung cancer screenings have a higher percentage of what is called “false positive” results. This means that results may show a spot on the scan that is ultimately confirmed not to be lung cancer. Therefore, all abnormal findings will need additional follow-up and testing to confirm if they are cancerous or not. In many cases, any spots found are not cancerous. However, it is important that you work with your health care provider to ensure proper follow-up is conducted.
If you would like to have upcoming issues of our free Inspiration newsletter delivered to your home, please contact Jennifer at (312) 628-0219 or JKustwin@resphealth.org.

Please feel free to copy and distribute this newsletter. The issue can also be viewed online at RESPHEALTH.ORG/INSPIRATION.

To make a donation to support Respiratory Health Association’s outreach and educational programs for people living with COPD, please contact Anastasia at (312) 628-0251 or ASchriber@resphealth.org.

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For more information, contact Jennifer at (312) 628-0219 or JKustwin@resphealth.org.

Inspiration COPD Newsletter provides information for people living with COPD and their caregivers. If you think you may have COPD, talk to your health care provider.

For more information, contact Respiratory Health Association at (312) 243-2000 or RESPHEALTH.ORG/COPD.

CONTACT RESPIRATORY HEALTH ASSOCIATION

PULMONARY REHAB SPOTLIGHT

RHA staff spoke with Sarah Volk, RRT of Community Hospital-Munster, IN, about her experiences with RHA’s Living Better Together COPD Conference.

“In 2017, I encouraged patients to attend RHA’s COPD Conference so they could see there is a large community helping with issues related specifically to their COPD needs. A large number of our pulmonary rehabilitation participants proudly attended last year’s event and we hope to double attendance this year! RHA has made attending the conference attainable for our COPD patients by providing the biggest and most feared obstacle—access to supplemental oxygen throughout the event.

Sarah’s group will also be participating in RHA’s Caregiver’s Toolkit project, as a part of our Midwest regional partnerships. You can learn more about this project featured on pg. 4.

For a detailed list of pulmonary rehab programs in your area, visit RESPHEALTH.ORG/COPD.

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