RESPIRATORY HEALTH ASSOCIATION®

EMPOWERING WOMEN WITH COPD

weCare

Women Empowered through COPD Awareness and Respiratory health Education

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The WE CARE campaign goal is to raise awareness about chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) among women who may be or are diagnosed with COPD. Despite the growing number of women living with COPD, many people still associate it as something that only affects older men.

Many women with COPD, or who are at risk for COPD, delay going to the doctor when symptoms appear or worsen. This could be due to several reasons- they brush it off as something minor, they don't have time to go to an appointment, or they're embarrassed about their symptoms.

We want women to know that WE CARE and want them to be the healthiest version of themselves.

In this packet you will learn more about the symptoms of COPD, what to talk to your provider about, and other tips to live better with COPD.

IDENTIFYING SYMPTOMS

When someone has COPD, airways and air sacs lose elasticity, air sac walls become inflamed or destroyed, and excess mucus clogs the airways. All of these issues make breathing difficult.

COMMON SYMPTOMS INCLUDE:

- Cough,
- Shortness of breath,
- Difficulty taking deep breaths,
- Excess phlegm, and
- Wheezing or whistling.

You may notice it's harder to breathe when you're exercising or if you wake up in the middle of the night. People with COPD often experience nighttime awakenings because of coughing, wheezing, breathlessness, or nasal congestion. Think back to when your symptoms first appeared- are they worsening or different from when they started?

If you have new or worsening symptoms it may be a good idea to make an appointment with your healthcare provider.

MANAGING YOUR COPD

While there isn't a cure for COPD, it can be managed through medication and non-medical treatments.

COMMON STRATEGIES INCLUDE:

Controller and reliever medications

Supplemental oxygen

Pulmonary rehabilitation

Quitting smoking

Staying up to date on vaccinations

Healthy eating to help elevate energy levels

TALKING TO YOUR DOCTOR

It's important to be honest when you talk with your doctor and healthcare team. Be sure to talk about all of your symptoms- don't skip over things you think may not be important. Not telling your doctor the whole story because you're ashamed, shy, or trying to put yourself in a more positive light can actually put your health more at risk.

Women juggle many roles in their lives- partner, mother, caregiver, friend and colleague, among others. While these are important roles, it's also important to take care of yourself.

Let your doctor know what's going on in your life outside of your symptoms.

THIS CAN INCLUDE:

- Your smoking habits
- Your contact with secondhand smoke, and
- What do you notice makes your symptoms worse or better?

By building out a larger picture of your whole life your doctor can help you achieve the healthiest version of yourself.

RESPIRATORY HEALTH ASSOCIATION®

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