

INSPIRATION COPD NEWSLETTER

Respiratory Health Association's newsletter for people living with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), their families, and caregivers.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 2 *Embracing Winter:
Indoor Exercise*
- 3 *Stay Healthy This Winter
(continued)*
- 5 *Empowering Caregivers:
Navigating COPD*
- 5 *Share your COPD story!*

WHAT IS COPD?

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a combination of lung damage and mucus production that makes it hard to breathe. COPD is used to describe emphysema, chronic bronchitis, or a combination of the two. Symptoms include cough, shortness of breath, wheezing, and chest tightness.

STAY HEALTHY THIS WINTER: YOUR GUIDE TO VACCINES AND AVOIDING INFECTIONS

There are many ways to manage and avoid COPD exacerbations, including the use of inhaled corticosteroids, pulmonary rehabilitation, and quitting smoking. Most people don't know that bacterial or viral infections, like the flu and COVID-19, are responsible for a majority of COPD flare-ups. These infection-related exacerbations often lead to hospitalizations and worsening of respiratory symptoms. Staying up-to-date on your annual vaccinations is one of the best ways to prevent COPD flare-ups by reducing severe disease and hospitalizations.

Unfortunately, many COPD patients miss this important step in their COPD care management. COPD patients should remain up-to-date on the COVID-19 vaccine and boosters, annual flu shot, RSV vaccine, the pneumococcal vaccine, and Tdap. Contact your healthcare provider for more recommendations and to address concerns.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

EMBRACING WINTER: INDOOR EXERCISE

During winter, people with COPD may face unique challenges in maintaining an active lifestyle. The colder temperatures and snow can make it tempting to stay indoors, leading to long periods of inactivity. Winter weather can also exacerbate COPD symptoms due to cold air and dry conditions. However, it's important for those with COPD to find ways to keep moving even when the weather is terrible.

Regular indoor exercise during winter can be beneficial for people with COPD. Physical activity helps strengthen muscles, which may reduce symptoms of breathlessness and fatigue. It may also help improve stamina, balance, and performance in everyday activities. Maintaining an active lifestyle is important for mental health. It can provide a sense of accomplishment and well-being. Indoor exercises can be adjusted for people with COPD, ensuring a safe and effective workout. It is important to talk with your healthcare provider before starting any exercise routine to make sure the exercises are safe for you.



EXAMPLES OF AT-HOME EXERCISES INCLUDE:

- Seated strength exercises, such as arm raises and knee extensions using a light weight. If you do not have weights, you can use other household items, such as a soup can.
- Leg exercises such as walking or stair climbing.

RHA's Project STRENGTH materials can help you create an at-home exercise routine and track your progress. You can download the workbooks from our website:

RespHealth.org/Strength

Prioritizing exercise at home during the winter months can help you proactively manage your COPD symptoms. It can also enhance your physical well-being, so that you can confidently enjoy the season.



CONGRATULATIONS DR. KHALILAH GATES!

We would like to congratulate Inspiration's Editor, Dr. Khalilah Gates on winning RHA'S Outstanding Partner in COPD award. We thank Dr. Gates for all her outstanding contributions in advancing RHA's mission and contributions to COPD work and research.



STAY HEALTHY THIS WINTER: YOUR GUIDE TO VACCINES AND AVOIDING INFECTIONS (CONTINUED)

COVID-19 VACCINE AND BOOSTERS

The COVID-19 vaccine is especially important for people living with COPD. It is also important for members of their households. COPD patients are at a higher risk of developing severe illness which may require hospitalization if infected. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), everyone aged five years or older should receive one dose of the 2023-2024 updated COVID-19 vaccine from Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, or Novavax. The updated vaccination closely targets the current dominant variant: XBB. As the COVID-19 virus changes, we may see more updated vaccines.

To stay updated on the current recommendations, speak to your healthcare provider. You may also visit the CDC Vaccine Overview webpage [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/).

FLU SHOT AND RSV VACCINE

While your sleeve is rolled up for your COVID-19 booster, you should also consider getting this year's flu shot. People with COPD can reduce their odds of severe illness or hospitalization by 38% by getting the flu shot. The CDC recommends that everyone over the age of 6 months should get their flu vaccine every season. Flu season is typically from October through May. The CDC also recommends that adults aged 60 years or older receive one dose of the RSV vaccine. During these times, visit your local pharmacy, healthcare provider, or health department. You can receive your seasonal vaccines at these locations.

Please visit [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov) to find a location providing flu and RSV vaccines near you.

PNEUMOCOCCAL VACCINE & TDAP

The pneumococcal vaccine is also important for people living with COPD. People with COPD are more likely than others to get lung infections. They are also more likely to experience severe illness. Bacterial or fungal infections can cause pneumonia which results in inflamed air sacs in the lungs. COPD patients with pneumonia could experience respiratory failure. This is caused by a buildup of fluids in their lungs. To decrease your risk, adults 65 or older should get routine pneumococcal vaccinations, according to the CDC.

Adults with COPD should also receive a dose of the Tdap vaccine. They should get a booster every ten years to prevent Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Pertussis (whooping cough).

Visit cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/pneumo/ to learn more about the recommendations for the pneumococcal vaccine.

PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS!

Staying up-to date with vaccines is one of many ways to protect yourself this winter. To further protect yourself, you should strongly consider wearing a mask indoors while in public. This helps prevent infections in group settings. Make sure to cover coughs and sneezes, wash your hands regularly, and avoid contact with those who are sick. If you feel ill, stay out of public spaces. Contact your healthcare provider for further guidance and recommendations. Make sure to protect yourself and others this flu season!

TREATMENT OF INFECTIONS

If you develop flu, RSV, COVID-19, or pneumonia symptoms, reach out to your healthcare provider as soon as they start. Medications are available for the flu and COVID-19. They can reduce the duration and severity of illness if taken when symptoms first start. Additionally, if there are concerns for pneumonia, antibiotics are likely required. The sooner treatments are started, the more likely they are to reduce complications.



CLINICAL TRIAL: DO YOU HAVE REGULAR COPD FLARE-UPS?

If so, you may be interested in taking part in the RESOLUTE clinical study. The aim is to confirm if a medicine already used to treat another respiratory condition can reduce the number of flare-ups in people with COPD.

You may be able to join if:

- you are aged 40-85 years;
- have moderate to very severe COPD;
- have experienced two or more flare-ups in the past year;
- are a current smoker or ex-smoker who has smoked 20 cigarettes a day for at least one year; and
- have received triple combination inhaler therapy prior to joining the study.

The findings will help develop new COPD treatments.

If you are interested, please speak with your doctor or

Email: information.center@astrazeneca.com Phone: 1-877-240-9479



EMPOWERING CAREGIVERS: NAVIGATING COPD

Since its development, more than 20,000 people have consulted RHA's COPD Caregiver's Digital Toolkit to help manage their role as the caregiver of someone living with COPD. We are happy to share that the Caregiver's Toolkit is now available online and in an animated version! In 2023, our partners at The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute's Learn More Breathe Better® program transformed the toolkit into an animated video series, making it more accessible. There are four different animated videos that cover each module in the toolkit. These modules are: medication management, managing the home of someone living with COPD, how to prepare for a doctor visit, and how caregivers can engage in self-care, even when they are exhausted from their informal caregiving duties.

Please visit RespHealth.org/CaregiversToolkit to view the videos and download a digital copy of the Caregiver's Toolkit.

SHARE YOUR COPD STORY!

Thank you to everyone who attended our virtual Living Better Together® COPD Conference in November and to our speakers, who provided their time and expertise. We hope you found the webinars helpful and educational. You can find the entire recording, presentations, fact sheets, and more on our website: RespHealth.org/LBT

As mentioned during the conference, your COPD experience and story matter. Our Policy and Advocacy team want to hear from you!

By taking the time to tell your story, we can reach elected officials and change lives. We have created a survey to hear from you. Please answer the prompt that feels most appropriate to you with two or three sentences. We will be in touch if we have more questions.

THE PROMPTS ARE:

- What I Wish People Knew About COPD...
- What does a good day with COPD feel like?
- Lung Health Matters to Me Because...
- What does the COPD Conference mean to you?
- How has pulmonary rehab helped you?

We will use your comments to support our advocacy efforts and raise awareness about living with COPD.

Scan this QR code to share your story.





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INSPIRATION IS PUBLISHED BY:

Respiratory Health Association is a Chicago-based lung health charity focused on preventing lung disease, promoting clean air, and helping people live better through education, research, and policy change.

*For more information about RHA and our work on COPD contact: Erica Salem at **312-628-0235** or **esalem@resphealth.org** or visit **RespHealth.org/COPD**.*

This newsletter is not intended to provide specific medical advice, but general information for people living with COPD and their caregivers. If you think you may have COPD, talk to your healthcare provider.

Inspiration is edited by Khalilah Gates, MD, Assistant Professor of Medicine and Medical Education, Division of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine, Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine. We thank her for her assistance.

SUPPORT OUR WORK WITH COPD

*Please consider making a gift to support our COPD communications. You can call **(312) 628-0213** or go online to **RespHealth.org/donate** to make a gift today. Or mail your donation to:*

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*Please feel free to copy and distribute this newsletter. The issue can also be viewed online at **resphealth.org/inspiration**.*

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN SHARING YOUR STORY ABOUT LIVING WITH COPD AND WHAT YOU HOPE FOR IN A NEW MEDICATION?

The Institute for Clinical and Economic Review (ICER) wants to speak with individuals who have COPD. ICER is a healthcare nonprofit that measures how well prescription drugs work for patients and suggests a fair price for those drugs.

ICER wants to hear about your experience with COPD as they review a new COPD treatment.

The ICER team would set up a short call with you either individually or in a small group. All information would be summarized anonymously. ICER would compensate any individuals for their time (\$100 for approximately an hour call) in providing input over a call.

If you are interested in learning more about sharing your story with ICER, please reach out to Director of Patient Engagement, Catherine Koola Fischer, via **email at ckoola@icer.org**.

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