

SUMMER 2021



INSPIRATION COPD NEWSLETTER

Respiratory Health Association's newsletter for people living with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), their families, and caregivers

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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.



IS YOUR COPD SOMETHING MORE? A simple test can provide the answer.

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Up to 14 million people suffer from Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) in the United States with many more individuals still undiagnosed. The COPD diagnosis is usually made if a patient has a history of smoking and symptoms of shortness of breath or cough; followed by testing of someone's lung capacity via spirometry. The testing proves the reduced ability to empty the lungs and a diminished lung function leads to shortness of breath with activity, cough, and as it progresses, sometimes leads to the need for oxygen. The doctor will treat with inhalers that help to open the air passages, allowing fewer symptoms and preventing flares of COPD.

Besides cigarette exposure, a genetic disease called Alpha-1 Antitrypsin Deficiency (Alpha-1), is also a cause of COPD.

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COVID-19 UPDATES & CONTINUING TO PROTECT YOURSELF

About one third of the United States is fully vaccinated against COVID-19, and nearly 72% of adults 65 or older are fully vaccinated. The CDC has stated fully vaccinated people (those who have received two doses of Pfizer or Moderna, or one dose of Johnson & Johnson at least two weeks ago) can resume most normal activities without wearing a mask or physically distancing. As summer holidays approach, families may want to gather to celebrate. However, there are still some things to consider:

- If a family member shows signs of illness before gathering, it may be best to reschedule until symptoms pass or the person receives a negative COVID-19 test.
- Keep in mind that some businesses, restaurants, or situations may still require you to wear a mask. Call ahead or check online if you're unsure.
- Planning a family trip? Masks are required for planes and public transportation. Take steps to protect yourself while traveling- wash your hands often, monitor your symptoms, and cover any coughs or sneezes.
- Older adults with underlying conditions may want to continue to wear a mask at large indoor gatherings or crowded events.

If you are not vaccinated, it is important to get the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as possible. COVID-19 vaccines have been shown to be effective at preventing the disease, especially severe disease and death, and reduce the risk of people spreading it.

It is also important to monitor the advice given by the CDC and other federal, state, and local authorities. Respiratory Health Association will continue to provide guidance and education on protecting you from COVID-19, so please reach out with any questions.

IS YOUR COPD SOMETHING MORE? Continued

Alpha-1 patients are born without the levels of a protective enzyme needed in their lungs, leaving them less protected to daily exposure to pollution, smoke, dust, pollen, etc. Every breath leads to small inflammatory reactions in our lungs, and that inflammation needs to be controlled so it doesn't do more damage to our lungs. The Alpha-1 enzyme is what controls this inflammation. The guidelines for COPD management state that patients should be tested for Alpha-1 at the time of diagnosis of COPD. As the disease is genetic, there are also major implications for the entire extended family and the lifetime risk for lung disease.

There is a new treatment option for Alpha-1 patients that helps to improve symptoms, called Bronchoscopic Lung Volume Reduction (BLVR). BLVR is an FDA approved procedure for eligible COPD and Alpha-1 patients with advanced emphysema and COPD, in which one-way valves, such as the Spiration® Valve System (by Olympus) are inserted into the airway allowing air to leave the sick regions of the lung. Since COPD leads to the inability to empty lungs fully with every exhaled breath, the procedure allows the sickest regions of the lung to shrink in size to allow healthier portions to expand. This allows the chest to shrink from its over inflation and patients can breathe more efficiently and do more exercise.



A person having lung function measured by spirometry.

The procedure is done with a bronchoscope, so there is no cutting, but the patient is asleep like having an operation. There is a specific workup to determine if someone is a candidate for the valves that involve Pulmonary Function Testing and a high-resolution CT scan. The clinical studies for this procedure proved safety and efficacy, but also showed who will not benefit from valves, alleviating an unnecessary procedure.

If you've been told you suffer from COPD, ask your provider if you've been tested for Alpha-1 Antitrypsin Deficiency and also have the work-up for Bronchoscopic Lung Volume Reduction done to see if you're a candidate for one-way valves to help with your emphysema.

Learn more about the clinical benefits, potential risks and complications of the Spiration® Valve System at spiration.com.

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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.

If you would like to receive more information for people living with COPD, please visit resphealth.org/copd.

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.

CONTACT RESPIRATORY HEALTH ASSOCIATION

If you would like to have upcoming issues of our free *Inspiration* newsletter delivered to your home, please contact **Hannah Mestyane** at **312-628-0207** or hmestyane@resphealth.org.

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