



Spring 2013

Lifestyles for COPD

Managing COPD: You're in charge

Your health care team probably tells you that you need to manage your COPD. But what does that mean? And why is your role important?

The first goal in managing COPD is to control your symptoms. You may often feel short of breath with even light activity. You also may cough a lot, cough up mucus and feel tired. Even simple activities like showering, housecleaning and shopping may become difficult. With proper planning, you can reduce symptoms, feel better and enjoy life more.

Here's what you can do to manage symptoms

Take all your medicines, including daily controller medicine, even if you feel well. Pace yourself and get enough rest. Stay physically active, exercising on most days according to your capacity, and eat healthy foods. See your health care team for regular medical care.

Know what to avoid

A second goal is to slow lung damage and prevent flare-ups or exacerbations. An exacerbation is a sudden worsening of symptoms that requires urgent

treatment and sometimes a hospital stay. Even after recovery, your lungs may not return to their former level of functioning. By preventing an exacerbation, you may avoid serious illness and the hassle and expense of extra medical treatment. And you might prevent a permanent decline in lung function.

What you can do to slow lung damage

Don't smoke and ask others to not smoke around you. Stay inside on days when air pollution levels are high. Stay up-to-date on flu and pneumonia shots. Wash your hands frequently. Call your doctor if your symptoms suddenly get worse.

Did you know?

Spirometry can measure how severe your breathing problems are. It can also help your doctor decide how well your treatment is working. It's quick and painless, and it can be done during an office visit. Your doctor may have used this test to diagnose your COPD. If you haven't had this test, ask your doctor how you were diagnosed and if you need this test.

Health checks

Every year, ask your doctor about these wellness checks. You may need some of them more than once a year.

- ✓ Update your COPD management plan
- ✓ Take a spirometry test
- ✓ Monitor your weight
- ✓ Get a flu shot

Also, check with your doctor to see if your vaccines are up to date, including your pneumonia shot and your combined tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis vaccine.

If you've thought about quitting smoking, Quit the Nic, our free program, offers:

- One-on-one counseling with a registered nurse
- An action plan
- Educational materials

To enroll or for more details, call 1-800-811-1764. Nurses are available from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Saturday. TTY users should call 1-800-240-3050.

Real readers, real advice

Who knows more about living with COPD than those facing the same daily issues as you? We'd love to share your feedback to help support and inspire other members living with COPD. Just email us at bcnccm@bcbsm.com with any tips you'd like to share with other readers.



Even mild COPD affects the heart

The old tune, "The thigh bone's connected to the hip bone ..." rings true, even when it comes to COPD. Everything in the body is connected to something else, and the lungs are no exception.

It's been known for a long time that having severe COPD can harm the heart. But it has been less clear whether mild COPD can cause heart trouble. In fact, the *New England Journal of Medicine* suggests that even mild COPD causes wear and tear on the heart.

Why is this of concern?

A weak heart can't pump as much blood with each beat. That means the body's tissues don't get enough oxygen and nutrients.

When the heart becomes very weak, it is called heart failure. This doesn't mean the heart isn't working at all. But people with heart failure often feel tired. They may have breathing problems, and fluid can build up in their lungs.

What can you do?

By managing your COPD, you may help your heart stay healthy. A healthy lifestyle does wonders, too. So stay physically active and eat a healthy diet. And if you take medicine for COPD, high blood pressure or cholesterol, be sure to take it as prescribed. After all, everything is connected!

Get help to quit smoking

One of the best things you can do for your COPD is to quit smoking. That's where our personalized smoking cessation program *Breathe*® can help. Learn ways to cope with nicotine cravings and get the extra support you need to quit for good.

To access this program:

- Visit your plan's website.
- Log in as a member.
- Click on the *Health and Wellness* tab.
- Click *BlueHealthConnection*®.
- Click *My Digital Health Coaching* and then click *Breathe*.

Feel better with exercise

It's hard to think about exercising if you're tired or short of breath. But getting exercise can actually help give you more energy and improve your COPD. And when you can breathe more easily, you can do more of the activities you enjoy.

How exercise helps

Exercise helps your heart send blood and oxygen through your body. When there's more oxygen in your blood, it's easier to breathe. This helps reduce the shortness of breath that comes with COPD. And, in addition to helping your muscles get stronger so you can do more, exercise will also help you lose extra weight. Being overweight makes your heart and lungs work harder, which can make it more difficult to breathe.

Get ready for exercise

The first step in an exercise regimen is to talk with your doctor. He or she may give you a test to see how much exercise is safe for you. Your doctor may also recommend pulmonary rehabilitation. This is a program that teaches you special breathing techniques to use during exercise.

Depending on your fitness level, your doctor may have you do a specific exercise program. Or, you may get to choose your own exercise. If you do, choose something appropriate that you enjoy.

Some ideas include walking, riding a stationary bike, swimming, slow dancing or yoga. Follow any instructions your doctor has given you.

Take it slow

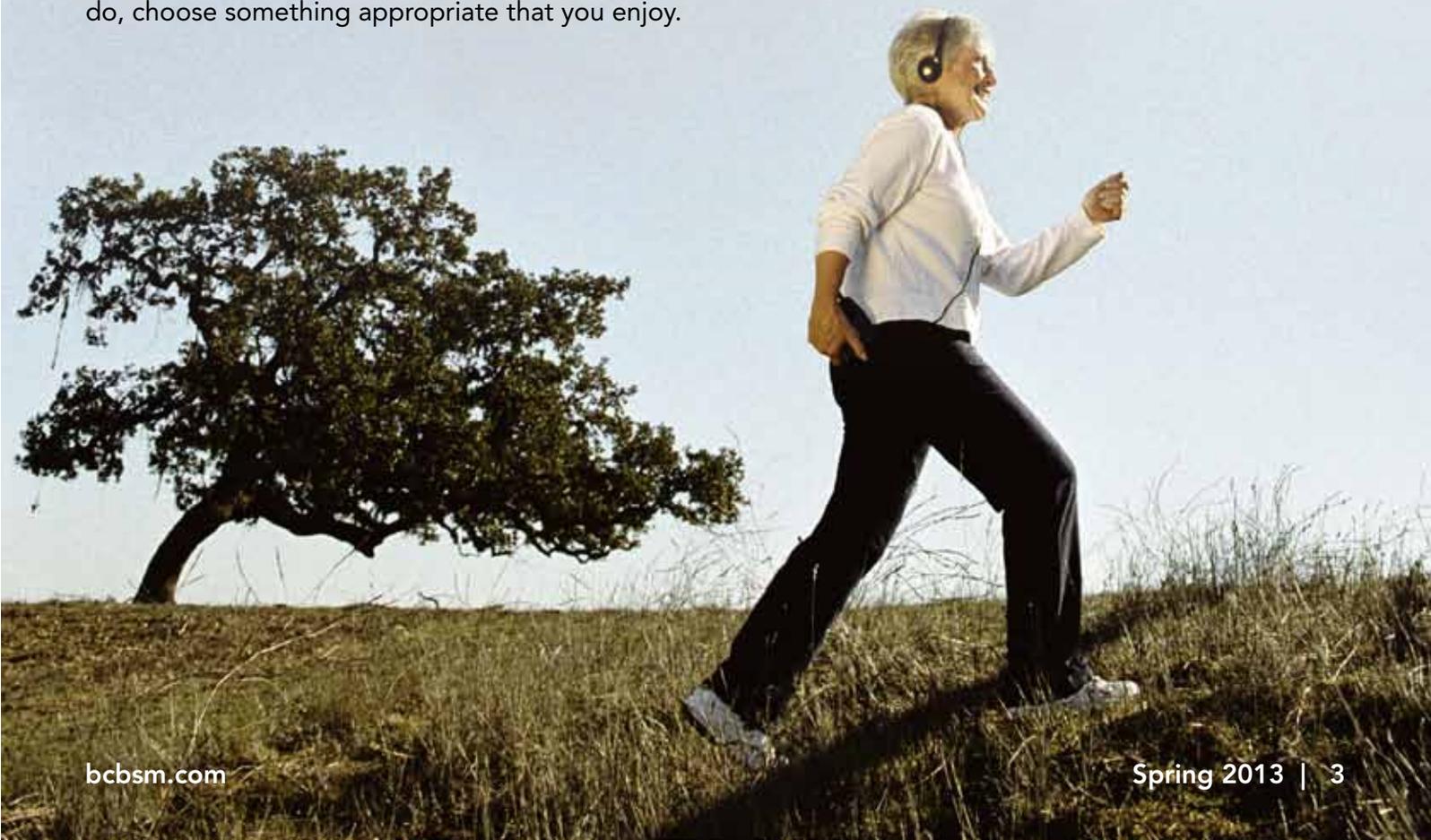
Getting started is often the hardest part. You probably have lots of reasons why you don't feel like exercising. But try to remember why you're doing it — even a small amount of exercise will improve your health and ease shortness of breath.

Warm up for a few minutes first by walking slowly or doing gentle stretching. At first, this may be all you can do. If so, that's fine. Do as much as you can, even if it's just for a few minutes. Over time, try to add a few extra minutes to your workout. Aim to work up to exercising 20 to 30 minutes at least three days a week.

Stay with it

Create an exercise schedule for yourself and try to stick to it. Exercising with a friend or in a class may help keep you motivated.

Exercising may feel hard at first, but it will get easier over time. And, after a few weeks, you should start to feel the positive results of your hard work — less shortness of breath and more energy.





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Health or wellness or prevention information

If you have questions about this program, have received this information in error, would prefer not to receive further information or want to inquire about resources for members with special needs, please call:

1-800-392-4247 | 1-800-257-9980 (TTY)
8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday

For Customer Service, please call the number listed on the back of your ID card.

> HEALTHY LIVING AND GOOD EATING

Peach Chutney

Servings: 1½ cups



Peaches contain beta-carotene, which can help in managing COPD. This tasty side dish is great with grilled chicken or fish.

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| 3 tablespoons cider vinegar | 1 teaspoon finely chopped garlic |
| 3 tablespoons dark brown sugar | 1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger |
| ⅓ cup red onion, diced | 4 medium peaches |
| ¼ cup sweet pepper (red or green), diced | (about a pound) skinned, pitted and chopped |
| ¼ cup golden raisins | |

Put the vinegar and sugar into a small sauce pan. Bring to a boil and add onion, pepper, raisins, garlic and ginger. Simmer for 10 minutes.

Add peaches and cook about 5 minutes longer. Fruit should keep its shape.

Taste to check seasonings, and serve warm or cold. Refrigerated chutney will keep up to a month.

Nutritional information per 1-tablespoon serving: 22 calories; 0 g fat; 5 g carbohydrate; less than 1 g protein; 1 mg sodium; less than 1 g fiber.