Controlling COPD

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a serious condition. If you have it, you can still live well. Here’s how:

1. **Stop smoking.** That’s the best way to avoid more damage to your lungs.
2. **Protect the lungs.** Try to stay away from things that could irritate them. That might be dust or strong fumes. Also, try not to breathe other people’s cigarette smoke.
3. **See your doctor for checkups.** Don’t miss any, even if you feel fine. If there’s something you can’t do anymore because it’s hard to breathe, tell your doctor.
4. **Avoid illness.** With COPD, a cold or other respiratory infection can get very serious. Wash your hands often and get a yearly flu shot. Ask your doctor if you should get a pneumonia vaccine.
5. **Be active.** Moderate exercise can actually help you breathe better. Make sure to ask your doctor what kind of exercise is right for you.

*Sources: American Lung Association (www.lung.org); National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (www.nhlbi.nih.gov)*

**If your doctor prescribed medications for COPD,** it is important to take the medication on a regular basis. This will help prevent flare-ups of COPD. Taking COPD medication on a regular basis can also help you have a more active lifestyle and help you do things without being easily short of breath.

Contract services are funded under contract with the State of Arizona. This is general health information and should not replace the advice or care you get from your provider. Always ask your provider about your own health care needs.

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What to do with opioids you don’t need

Opioids are in the news a lot. One reason is because of the tens of thousands of overdose deaths that happen every year when people misuse these very strong drugs.

You can help end this crisis. Has your doctor prescribed opioids to treat your pain? If your treatment has ended and you no longer need the drugs, don’t keep them around. Never give them to anyone else. Dispose of them properly. Here’s how:

• Find a drug take-back program. These programs collect old medicines and dispose of them properly for you. You can search online for a drug take-back program in your community. The police department might know of one too.

• Ask a pharmacy. They may be able to dispose of the medicine for you.

Remember that unused medicines kept around may end up in the wrong hands. Someone could find and take the medicine that was meant for you and an overdose could occur.

Additional sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov); National Institute on Drug Abuse (www.drugabuse.gov)

Ask about Narcan

Opioid overdoses kill people. They can be reversed by a drug called naloxone (Narcan). Anyone can give this drug and save a life. From 1996 through June 2014, it saved the lives of more than 26,000 people in the U.S. You will still need to call 911 after you give it, because it will wear off in one to two hours. To learn more, talk to your doctor or pharmacist.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov)

Did you know that you may be able to get Lifeline cell service plus a smartphone at no cost to you? Go to www.MercyCareAZ.org or call Member Services at 1-800-624-3879 and ask about the Assurance Wireless Lifeline program.