



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Take a Breath

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease Employment and Activity Limitations – United States, 2013

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[Announcer] *This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

[Charlotte Duggan] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm Charlotte Duggan, filling in for your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Breathing is a natural bodily function that most take for granted. But for people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or COPD, inhaling and exhaling is a daily struggle.

Dr. Anne Wheaton is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. She's joining us today to discuss the health problems associated with COPD. Welcome to the show, Anne.

[Dr. Wheaton] Thank you.

[Charlotte Duggan] Anne, what is COPD?

[Dr. Wheaton] COPD is a group of respiratory conditions, including emphysema and chronic bronchitis, which make it hard to breathe. Some of the symptoms are shortness of breath, chronic cough, and excess mucous production. In addition to chronic symptoms, patients periodically experience flare ups during which symptoms get more severe than usual.

[Charlotte Duggan] What causes COPD?

[Dr. Wheaton] Most COPD in the United States is caused by tobacco smoke, although about a quarter of COPD patients have never smoked. COPD may also be caused by industrial fumes or other air pollution. A small percentage of COPD cases is caused by genetic disorder.

[Charlotte Duggan] What impact does COPD have on people's lives?

[Dr. Wheaton] Since COPD makes breathing difficult, people with COPD may have trouble running errands or walking or climbing stairs.

[Charlotte Duggan] Is there a cure?

[Dr. Wheaton] Unfortunately, there *is* no cure for COPD. However, there are several things patients can do to slow the progression of COPD and control symptoms. First, smokers should make *every* effort to quit smoking. Just because you've already

developed COPD doesn't mean it's too late to quit. Quitting can slow the progression of COPD and may mean fewer symptoms or flare ups. Second, there are many medications available to treat COPD, but it's important to take them as prescribed. For instance, if your doctors advised you to take a medication every day, don't skip a dose because you feel OK that day. If your COPD causes low blood oxygen levels, your physician may also prescribe supplemental oxygen. Third, pulmonary rehabilitation combines patient education and exercise training to improve your quality of life. These personalized plans help manage your symptoms and improve your stamina. Finally, respiratory infections can trigger a flare up of symptoms, so annual flu vaccines are recommended for people with COPD.

[Charlotte Duggan] Anne, where can listeners get more information about COPD?

[Dr. Wheaton] Listeners can go to cdc.gov/COPD. And to get help quitting smoking, they can call 1-800-QUIT-NOW or visit smokefree.gov online.

[Charlotte Duggan] Thanks, Anne. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Anne Wheaton about the health problems associated with COPD.

Although there's no cure, it can be managed with medications and pulmonary rehabilitation. People with COPD who smoke are strongly encouraged to quit.

Until next time, be well. This is Charlotte Duggan for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.