



October 19th, 2015

Understanding COPD

October is Autism, Breast Cancer, Celiac, Eye Health, Flu Prevention, Lupus, Psoriasis and SIDS Awareness Month

The CDC recently reviewed statistics on Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). The primary cause of COPD is smoking and the quality of life impact and economic burden are significant. COPD sufferers are 4 times more likely to be unable to work and 3 times more likely to be limited in their activities, such as walking or climbing stairs. A recent StatsCan Health Report indicates that about 17% of Canadians between 35 and 79 years old have symptoms consistent with COPD. Since COPD is incurable, health care needs to focus on prevention measures (quitting smoking) and better management.

CPD and Other Chronic Conditions

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease is a condition that interferes with breathing, however sufferers are more susceptible to other serious conditions as well. A Dutch study found that having COPD increases the risk of sudden cardiac death (SCD) by more than one-third. SCD is associated with heart arrhythmias - which can be triggered by COPD - but also high heart rates, hypoxia, cardiac ischemia, and heart failure, which are also related to both COPD.

Reduced Exercise Tolerance

It's an unfortunate effect of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) that it reduces exercise tolerance. That said, exercise is exactly what can slow the deterioration in airflow obstruction and health status. Additionally, the lack of exercise can lead to muscle atrophy, limiting vitality in general. Although it takes more effort to break this physical and emotional inertia, the resulting improvements in quality of life are well worth it.

Some Supplements May Help

Vitamin D supplementation may be helpful in preventing flare-ups of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). UK researchers found that giving vitamin D to COPD patients, who were already deficient in blood vitamin D, experienced less moderate/severe exacerbations. On the other hand, patients with normal vitamin D levels did not benefit from supplementation. And, vitamin D did not prevent upper respiratory infections in either group.

Lung cancer is not the only concern when it comes to smoking - so many people live day-in/day-out with limitations posed by conditions such as COPD. Smoking cessation is critical to improved health - your pharmacist can help you quit!