

Breathe Easy

KEEPING YOUR BREATHING PROBLEMS IN CHECK

ROTECH[®]
HEALTHCARE INC.

YOU CAN IMPROVE YOUR QUALITY OF LIFE WITH GOOD MANAGEMENT OF YOUR DISEASE!

It's important to take an active role in managing your health, especially if you have breathing problems. Patients with chronic breathing problems often become frustrated with the limitations their condition places on their lives. Symptoms such as cough and shortness of breath can prevent you from enjoying activities as you once did. Frequent visits to the hospital or emergency room become burdensome physically, financially, and emotionally. Cooperate with your doctor by closely following the treatment plan designed for you. Here are some strategies to actively manage your chronic breathing problems.

TAKE YOUR MEDICATIONS

One of the most important things you can do is to take all of your medications exactly as ordered. Many medications will not work as effectively if not taken as directed. Failure to use them as prescribed by your doctor may result in periods where your breathing is unstable. Some medications must be taken regularly to obtain the full benefit.

When antibiotics are ordered, it is very important to take them until they are all gone. Finishing treatment completely is necessary to kill all of the bacteria causing the infection, and not doing so can promote the spread of antibiotic-resistant properties. If you're unsatisfied with one or more of your medications, don't just stop taking it! Talk with your doctor about the problems you are having, and see if you can find a solution. Suddenly stopping some medications can be dangerous.

USE YOUR OXYGEN

In COPD patients with a low oxygen level, oxygen therapy is the only treatment that has been shown to extend survival (i.e., how long you live). To receive the full benefit, it is important to wear the oxygen exactly as ordered by your doctor. It is especially important to wear the oxygen during sleep and activity, when oxygen levels are typically at their lowest levels. If your oxygen level is low all the time, oxygen should be worn 24 hours per day.



REGULAR DOCTOR VISITS

Keep all appointments with your doctor. Regular visits allow the doctor to monitor your condition and make necessary changes in your care. If your condition changes – such as increased shortness of breath, change in cough or sputum production, increased weakness, or you have other new symptoms – contact your doctor as soon as possible. Waiting 2-3 days may be the difference between taking an antibiotic at home and ending up in the hospital with pneumonia.

EAT, DRINK, AND REST

Proper nutrition, fluid intake, and sleep play an important role in your overall wellness and ability to resist infection. Maintain your weight near what is ideal for your height.

AVOID INFECTIONS

During cold and flu season, avoid large gatherings or those with cold and flu symptoms. Many hospitalizations start with a well-meaning relative stopping by with the grandkids, who may happen to have “colds” at the time. Although not that serious for the grandkids, that cold can land you in the hospital. Place a friendly sign on your door to remind them. (Need a sign? Contact your local Rotech location! We have them available upon request.)

EDUCATION

Continue to learn more about your condition and how you can be more involved in managing it. Be sure to take a look at our library of educational material available on Rotech.com! Educated patients are able to make better decisions and are more likely to stick with their treatment. Remember, you can improve your quality of life with good management of your disease!



EAT A HEALTHFUL DIET

Proper nutrition plays a significant role in your breathing, and eating and drinking enough can make a real difference! Many patients with difficulty breathing also have issues eating properly. If you don't have the energy or breath to cook well, try preparing nutritious foods that require less energy to fix. Cook in large portions and freeze some to warm up later. Find the diet that's best for you and practice it on a daily basis to improve your general health and breathing, and talk to your doctor if you have questions.

STAY ACTIVE

Regular activity keeps your entire body in better physical condition. A regular exercise program, approved by your doctor, can help your body to use oxygen more effectively, decrease shortness of breath, and even increase your resistance to infection. Patients who become inactive and “retire to the recliner” are often more depressed, and recent evidence suggests they don't live as long.



VACCINATIONS

Yearly flu shots help to prevent most forms of the influenza virus. Patients with chronic illnesses like COPD are often more susceptible to the virus due to a weakened immune system. The pneumovax or “pneumonia shot” helps to prevent the more common types of bacterial pneumonia. Once thought to be good for a lifetime, it is now recommended that the shot be repeated every 5–7 years.

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