Five Lifestyle Changes to Make Living With COPD Easier

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Living With COPD: Positive Lifestyle Changes for COPD Patients

Whether your chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is at stage I or IV, it's not too late to make changes that will improve the quality of your life.

Being inactive and sitting on the couch watching TV for most of the day is a surefire way to have your health spiral out of control. No one is saying it is going to be easy, but I will guarantee if you stick to even some basic lifestyle changes you will have a better health outcome, physically and mentally.

Quit Smoking

If you have lung disease and still smoke then it's time to determine how serious you are about improving your situation. Many of us, myself included, have had to quit this addictive killer.

It's easy to just say I can't and continue smoking, but the reality is it will kill you. If that's not a good enough reason to quit smoking, how about the devastating effect your death will have on your family?

Your family will much rather the healthiest version of you possible than not have you at all. Missing out on watching your kids and grandkids grow up would be a tragedy. See your doctor about a quit smoking program and stick to it — this is the best action you can take for your health.

Educate Yourself on Your Medications

When you've been diagnosed with COPD, your doctor will prescribe you with medication to help stabilize your disease and make you able to breathe better. Some of these medications could be short-term while others may be permanent.

Before you leave your doctor's appointment, make sure you are well versed in how and when to take your medication. It's a good idea to ask your doctor what each medication does and any side effects that you may experience.

Some patients have problems remembering when to take their medication and therefore don't receive the full benefit of what the doctor has prescribed for them. Personally, I find it easier to take my medications at the time of brushing my teeth, morning and night.

Why this may not work for everyone, scheduling when you take your medication to coincide with something you always do in your daily routine can work well.

Nutrition Is Key

There are some basic guidelines you should stick by to help create a better you. Eating good quality food with high nutritional value is very important for your COPD diet, as this will not only improve your energy levels, but it will also help control your weight.

If there is one ingredient I recommend to remove from your diet as much as you can it is refined sugar. Excessive consumption of refined sugar is responsible for many health issues in our lives today, such as diabetes, weight gain and other chronic diseases.

Eating regular meals (up to five) throughout the day is far better than two or three large meals. Large portion sizes can put stress on your digestive system and lead to obesity and inactivity.

It can also put unnecessary stress on your respiratory system — as your stomach becomes full it puts pressure on the diaphragm, which can lead to breathlessness. Smaller nutritious meals are a far better way to treat your body — you'll be surprised how well your body will respond once it gets used to eating this way.

Keep yourself well hydrated with water to help with digestion and to keep your stomach feeling satisfied.

Next page: knowledge is power and more tips for living with COPD.

Knowledge Is Power

It is very easy to stick your head in the sand and hope it all goes away. Fact is, it won't go away and the more you ignore your disease the harder it will be to accept it.

When I was first diagnosed, I found it quite overwhelming. I was being diagnosed with a disease I'd never heard of. My way through it was to learn all I could about COPD.

They say that knowledge is everything, and in terms of working out how to deal with your disease, this is very true. Like everyone, I came across the doom and gloom websites that told me my life was just about over because I have end-stage COPD.

Then I started reading about people with COPD who were still working with end-stage COPD and had been doing so for many years. The more I read, the more I realized you can fight this disease; you may not be able to stop its progression but you sure can slow it down.

I still receive correspondence from people who don't believe I can run marathons and compete in Ironman events. Sometimes people are blinded by their own experience, and when they see someone doing something they can't, they don't believe it.

What would help their cause is not to doubt what they see or read, but rather ask how do you do it. While I have learned much from reading, I have learned much more from listening to other patients and their positive experiences.

Get Moving

Without a doubt, the single most important step I've taken to improve my quality of life is regular exercise. Many who have followed my journey would know how much of a deal I make of this.

To be able to lead the best life I can I have to be as fit and healthy as I can, which means as much exercise as possible. To keep motivated I like to challenge myself by competing in endurance events like marathons and Ironman events.

Having goals gives me added incentive to exercise, as once I've paid the race entry fees there's no way I will not be doing that event.

I understand that not everyone will take this same path, and you don’t have to. Committing to some type of physical exercise at least four times a week is all you need to do.

That commitment can start by simply getting up and down off a chair for as many minutes as you can tolerate, to meeting friends for a walk. Your current mobility will determine your starting point, and from here you can gradually build your exercise capacity.

Well-being Is In Your Hands

By incorporating these tips into your everyday life you will enjoy a better quality of life. Physically you will be more able to achieve your daily chores, but you will also feel much better about yourself and feel positive about your future.

COPD doesn’t have to ruin your life, but you have to dictate the terms of your disease and fight for your quality of life. Talk to your doctor, family, and friends — it’s time to be a better you!