Three Things to Avoid With COPD

by RUSSELL WINWOOD

Things to Avoid With COPD

Have you ever sat down and wondered what things you should avoid with COPD? Sometimes taking some time to identify your COPD triggers or situations which you should avoid but haven't can help reduce exacerbations. In this article, I will share the things I try to avoid.

If you're a newly diagnosed COPD patient, then this discussion might be very new to you. For those who are COPD veterans, you'll probably know what I'm about to discuss, but there's nothing like a refresher course, and I may learn some tips from you in the comments section below.

What Should I Avoid With COPD?

When I talk about things to avoid with COPD, I'm talking about the type of things which will worsen your symptoms and damage your lungs. They can be anything from food to environmental factors and can crop up in many areas of our life.

Starting from when I climb out of bed in the morning I know straight up there will be things which will make my day harder, some I can avoid, some I can't.

Avoid Lengthy Hot Showers

Like many other COPD patients showering in the morning can be the first obstacle. There's nothing like the hot steam from the shower to get us more breathless than we already are. This is the unavoidable trigger, but by using the exhaust fan or opening a window, it can reduce the steam and its effect. Taking shorter showers can also alleviate some discomfort.

Before we can escape the bathroom, our teeth may need a clean after we take our medication and for many patients, this can be a breathless challenge. My solution to this was to purchase an electric toothbrush. You may be surprised, but this will lessen the effort needed when brushing your teeth.

Avoid Extremely Hot and Cold Temperatures

The next part of my day is to take a look at the conditions outside. Is it raining, windy, hot, humid, cold, snowing, or is there smoke in the air? These are all things which will determine how I go about my day.

I reassess the environmental factors which may affect my breathing throughout the day. If for example, there is some burning off in the area I'm working, and I will either change the appointment to another day or change my shift with another employee.

If you are still working, it is good to have a conversation with your employer about situations you need to avoid as

they may worsen your symptoms. Most employers will work with you on this as it's in their best interest to keep you healthy and productive. No matter if you are still working or not assessing environmental triggers to your disease is an important part of managing your COPD.

Many COPD patients find weather extremes can trigger a flare-up. Being aware of the weather conditions and forecast can be helpful in managing your day-to-day activities. If it's going to be hot, look for places to go with air conditioning. If it's going to be cold, maybe staying indoors is the best plan.

For me, hot and windy conditions are the worst. I try to avoid being outside when the weather is like this as I know it will exacerbate my symptoms very quickly.

Avoid People Who Are Sick and Practice Good Hygiene

Be mindful of using good hygiene especially when you are out. Take a hand sanitizer or make sure you wash your hands regularly and avoid touching handrails if you can.

Being aware of the people around you are important. Infections can be disastrous for COPD patients, so minimizing our risk of infection is a priority. More and more patients are now wearing masks out in public to lessen the risk of succumbing to infections.

Many of the infections I have had in the past have been the result of coming in contact with sick people, so it pays to be diligent.

We have a rule among our family and friends, if you're sick or suspect you're coming down with something, then stay away.

COPD Triggers Vary By Person

When it comes down to the things to avoid when you have COPD, it will vary from patient to patient. Some of what I have talked about here will resonate with some patients but not with others. Some of you may find other triggers to your disease. The key is being aware of your specific intolerances and trying to work your life around them.

Food, environmental, household, medical and social settings are where COPD patients will be most at risk. If you can identify and avoid your triggers within those groups, you'll go a long way to improving your quality of life.