The Importance of Therapy for COPD Patients

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Ease Your Discomfort With Different Types of Therapy for COPD

COPD can be a very isolating condition. Your symptoms of COPD are personal and it can be difficult for other people to understand what you're going through every day. If you're not careful, your COPD could begin to isolate you socially and emotionally, leaving you feeling helpless in the face of pain and breathlessness.

Although nobody can cure this disease for you, there are people who can help you live much more comfortably and safely. Instead of suffering alone, consider reaching out to a trained therapist for tips, advice, support, and knowledge that will help you get your life back on track.

Physical Therapy for COPD

Although COPD targets your respiratory system, your whole body can suffer. Any COPD patient knows that all it takes is a few sleepless nights or a bout of humid weather to trample energy levels and leave your muscles feeling heavy and weary. After a while, the consequences can add up to extreme fatigue, immobility, and even muscle atrophy.

A physical and/or occupational therapist can help you regain your physical strength and agility and retain your independence by offering:

Advice on How to Move Wisely

When your breathing problems affect your energy and endurance, you will need to learn how to do things a bit differently. A physical therapist has a thorough knowledge of how the body moves, which means they're in a perfect position to help you modify your movement to make it easier on your body. In effect, you'll learn to become much more efficient with your energy.

Studies have repeatedly shown that the better you can stick with a targeted physical therapy routine that gently works out both your upper and lower body, the easier everyday tasks and activities will become. In the end, the more comfortable you can move, the less strain you'll put on your respiratory system, and that decrease your risk of COPD exacerbations — which is good news for everyone.

A Personal and Progressive Fitness Regimen

The trouble with fitness and exercise is that everyone is different, but so many people start with the same routine. If your lungs can't handle a flight of stairs, there's no way you'll manage a run around the block or a few laps in the pool. And that's perfectly alright.

A physical therapist is trained to learn about their patients, find a good starting place, and then revisit and alter daily and weekly exercises as the person gradually improve. They know when and how much to change, and

have the expertise to watch for signs of trouble or new hurdles that should be considered before moving forward. A physical therapist is like a personal trainer with thorough medical training, so you really do get the best of both worlds.

Respiratory Therapy

Your doctor is your closest ally in your fight against COPD, but there's room for more people on your medical care team. COPD symptoms often require a closer look, specialized knowledge and creative solutions, and that's where a respiratory care (RC) practitioner can come to the rescue.

Learn New Breathing Techniques

Research has shown that pulmonary rehabilitation programs can significantly improve daily life and long-term outlook for COPD patients, but you may not know where to begin.

Luckily, a respiratory therapist knows the ins and outs of these programs and can show you exactly how to do breathing exercises for COPD, controlled coughing, and other important airway management techniques.

A Holistic Helper

A respiratory therapist may have fairly specialized knowledge, but they can apply it in a number of ways. From diagnosis to discussing therapies to actually carrying out treatment, they will be there each step of the way, so you will have an opportunity to craft a close and comfortable relationship with your therapist. This can make a big difference in communication, trust, and ultimately, your disease management.

Psychological Therapy for COPD

COPD is clearly a physical illness, but the mental ramifications can be immense. In fact, people with COPD are up to three times more likely to experience mental health issues than the rest of the population. Not only are anxiety and depression common, but they can also make your prognosis a lot worse.

Even if you're not in the depths of depression, a visit with a therapist can do you a world of good. They will offer an attentive and compassionate ear, but can also steer you in a more positive, proactive, and confident direction.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

Most studies on the benefits of psychological therapy for COPD have focused on CBT, a method of monitoring your physiological reactions and learning how to take control of them. This technique has proven very helpful for people suffering from anxiety disorders.

Research on CBT and COPD is continuing, but some big strides have already been made. A CBT treatment intervention called the Lung Manual Treatment Program has been developed especially for COPD patients, which aims to help make sense of the connections between your emotional, mental and physical states, and help you consciously overcome the problems. Ask your doctor about the program, or for a reference to a CBT therapist.

Relaxation Therapy

With chronic illness comes chronic tension, and that strain could be affecting you more than you realize. If you find it hard to "switch off" your mind, relax your muscles and unwind, you should visit a therapist trained in relaxation techniques.

Guided meditation is another avenue towards more balanced emotions and stress relief, or you may be interested in seeing a hypnotist. Hypnosis is a legitimate therapy that uses persuasion and motivation to help you change your thoughts and behaviors. It can be useful for everything from quitting smoking to calming anxiety.

Conclusion

COPD isn’t easy to live with, nor is it completely predictable — you’ll most likely have good days and bad days. The key is to minimize the bad days and multiply the good days, and you’ll need to lean on other people to help you make that change. Remember, turning to therapy for COPD is not giving into failure, but rather having the wisdom to ask for help when you need it.