4 COPD Management Tips To Try Today

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COPD Management Tips

COPD is a chronic lung disease which many patients struggle to manage.

I was certainly one of those patients who found dealing with this disease difficult in the early stages of my diagnosis. Through building my knowledge about this disease, I have learned how to manage my disease very well.

In this article, I will share my top COPD management tips.

Diagnosis

From the moment you're diagnosed with COPD the learning process begins.

Gaining knowledge about your disease will arm you with the tools you need to manage your disease the best way possible.

Where do you go to gain knowledge?

The first and most valuable resource to learn about your disease is from your respiratory doctor. This is the person who has diagnosed you and had the most information about your diagnosis.

Tip: Build A Relationship With Your Doctor

Build a relationship with your respiratory doctor, so you feel comfortable telling them everything about how your disease affects you.

The more information you share with your doctor, the better advice they can give you to manage your disease.

If you have a question about your condition between doctors visits, then write it down. I always have a list of questions for my doctor when I have an appointment.

Other ways you can learn about your disease is from online recourses which can include your local lung associations, COPD support groups and websites like my own, COPD Athlete, where I share my experiences.

Inhalers

In the initial stages of being diagnosed with COPD, your doctor will determine the severity of your disease based on specific tests you have had done.

From this information, your doctor will prescribe one or more inhalers for you to take. Inhalers are necessary for a patient as they will help stabilize their COPD and provide much-needed relief.

Tip: The Inhaler Technique

The effectiveness of your inhalers is highly dependent on you taking them as prescribed and using the correct technique.

Many healthcare professionals I talk to say inhaler technique among patients can be quite weak.

When you are prescribed your inhalers ask your doctor to show you the correct inhaler techniques so you can maximize the benefits from them.

It can also be a good idea to talk to your pharmacist when having your prescription filled as they are also trained in inhaler techniques.

Having a refresher course in how to use your inhaler correctly is a good idea no matter how long you have had COPD.

Nutrition

My experience with diet has grown significantly since my initial diagnosis of COPD.

I have always known the importance of nutrition. However, in the last 18 months, I have found that you can achieve significant improvements in your symptoms by eating the right types of food.

My dietary strategies have been successful in significantly lowering my inflammatory markers. The result has been less breathlessness and less reliance on my rescue inhaler.

Tip: Find The Best Nutrition For You

Talk to your doctor about the best nutrition options for you. I firmly believe there is not a “one diet fits all” scenario.

For COPD patients eating foods that have anti-inflammation properties can be hugely beneficial. Avoiding foods that drive inflammation is equally important.

Inflammation has been proven to be a major driver in the respiratory disease, so any measures we can take to decrease inflammation is desirable.

If your doctor cannot help you with a specific nutrition plan, then I would suggest enlisting the help of a qualified nutritionist.

Exercise

When I mention the exercise, it can drive many patients into a state of panic, and I do understand why this is.

The thought of making yourself more breathless may not make a lot of sense. The truth is building your exercise tolerance has been proven to improve outcomes in COPD patients.

Why?

Whether we have a chronic disease or not, exercise improves our fitness. The fitter you become the easier you will breathe, the easier you breathe, the better quality of life you have.

Tip: Try Pulmonary Rehabilitation

Talk to your doctor about whether you are a suitable candidate to attend a pulmonary rehab class. There are some patients for whom pulmonary rehab is not an option, but for most, it can be.

What can pulmonary rehab offer?

A good quality program will provide you a range of tools to help manage your disease that should include breathing techniques, education, and exercise. The classes are supervised by qualified staff in a safe environment.

Pulmonary rehab will introduce you to a range of exercises in a controlled environment. The trained staff will start you at an exercise level you are comfortable with.

As you gain confidence in exercise, you will feel better about pushing yourself in this environment. The more you push yourself the fitter you'll become and the better you will feel.

Even if you have a mobility problem, a good pulmonary rehab program can design an exercise regime for you. Activities can range from basic chair exercises to using a treadmill to control pace and degree of incline.

Summary

The four tips I have talked about here form the basis of the principals I manage my disease by.

I call them the four pillars of COPD Wellness. These four principals have led me to live a better quality of life than most patients with my stage of the disease.

You need to learn about your disease to manage it well.

Part of your education will incorporate optimizing your medication use and eat the right types of food. When you optimize your medication usage and your nutrition, exercise becomes far more effective.