Avoiding a COPD Lung Infection

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How to Avoid Respiratory Infections When You Have COPD

If you have chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) you need to take extra precautions when it comes to avoiding respiratory infections. With the different types of viruses that can cause respiratory issues, it is vital to prepare yourself while you're out in public. While you cannot avoid all the bugs out there, taking care to prevent them as much as possible will decrease your chances of getting sick.

The last thing you need is a cold or the flu or any other infection that can potentially attack the lungs. A COPD infection could lead to an emergency room episode or worse yet, a bout in the ICU ward.

People with COPD are more susceptible to respiratory illnesses like the common cold, influenza and pneumonia. These conditions make it more difficult for you to breathe and could damage lung tissue further. If you are exposed to a virus and it progresses into bronchitis or pneumonia, you will know by the following symptoms:

Bronchitis Symptoms

- There will be a change in your sputum, such as the amount, consistency, color, and there may even be streaks of blood in it
- You will have a mild fever (<101°F or 38.3°C)
- You will feel very tired and worn out
- If you feel a tightness, burning, or a dull ache in your chest, it could be a sign of bronchitis
- It will feel worse when taking a deep breath or coughing
- You may experience wheezing or whistling sounds when you breathe

Pneumonia Symptoms

- Coughing with mucus that looks green, rust-colored or tinged with blood
- Fever (although some elderly may not present a fever)
- Chills
- You may have rapid, shallow breathing
- Pain in the chest that is worse when coughing or taking a breath
- Rapid heart rate
- Fatigue
- Shortness of breath

If you are diagnosed with either condition, antibiotic therapy can be prescribed as well as steroids and other medications to help you breathe and keep the condition from worsening.

If you are looking for ways to prevent lung infections from occurring, here are some things you can do:

Quit Smoking

Evidence has shown that smoking contributes to the development of COPD and makes it worse if the habit is not stopped. There are benefits from quitting, even if you have been smoking for years. The damage to the lungs is slowed to the same rate as a nonsmoker's in most cases.

Avoid Irritants

You will need to avoid airway irritants such as air pollution, dust and chemical fumes. These irritants injure lung tissue and cause your COPD to be much worse.

Have someone else do your house cleaning and other chores that expose you to dust and household cleaners if you can.

Get Vaccinated

Flu vaccines: It is imperative you get your flu shot every year. If you have COPD and you get influenza, you can develop severe complications from it. Getting the vaccine will also lower your chances of having flare-ups.

Pneumococcal vaccine: Pneumonia is a serious condition a person with COPD cannot afford to get. One shot is all you need, unless you received your first shot before turning 65 years old.

Pertussis vaccine: This is the vaccine for whooping cough. If you contract this illness, it can exacerbate COPD flare-ups.

Prevention is key to lung health when you have a condition like COPD. Being up on the recommended vaccines, staying away from lung irritants like cigarette smoke, and avoiding others who have colds or flus will keep you from developing flare-ups or, worse, lung infections.

Boosting Your Immunity

The key is to keep the immune system function high in the body all the time so these infections don't develop in the first place. The traditional methods used to keep immune system high by alternative health practitioners include the following:

- **Eat a healthy diet -** This means plenty of protein, fresh vegetables and fruits, healthy fats (coconut, olive, avocado, and butter), a handful of nuts or seeds, and dairy/grain if you can handle them.
- **Exercise three times a week -** Most people benefit from three days of working out with weights and three days of cardio exercise. It can be done, even with COPD, as long as you take precautions.
- **Get enough rest -** Rest gives your cells the time to heal and repair themselves. It also resets your hormones.
- **Wash your hands often but not with antibacterial soap -** Antibacterial soap works temporarily but the bacteria come back with vengeance in higher numbers.
- **Don't sleep in the same bed as your pets -** Pets are great companions but can harbor parasites such as round worms that you could get. Give them their own bed.
- **Don't overwork regularly -** If you go, go, go, how will your cells keep up? They're made to work and then rest. Utilize the natural rhythms of the body to rest and work.
- **Avoid excessive use of stimulants -** Excess stimulant use such as several cups of coffee daily will eventually wear out your adrenal glands and leave you frazzled emotionally. It's not worth it.