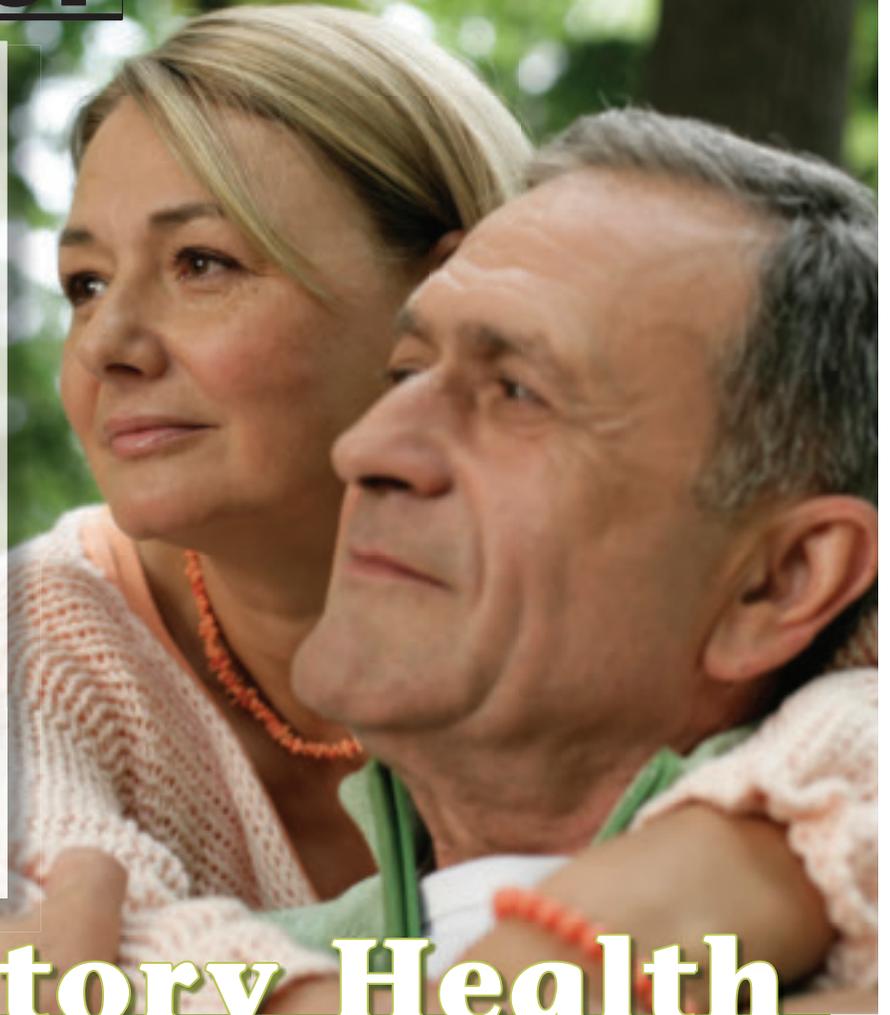


Counselor

Your respiratory system is your body's ventilation system, taking in energy in the form of oxygen and eliminating waste in the form of carbon dioxide. There is a breathtaking array of substances out there that can compromise your breathing—allergens, bacteria, viruses, tobacco smoke, and pollution. By making healthy lifestyle choices, you can help safeguard your lungs against more serious problems.



Respiratory Health

Respiratory Health

Respiratory Health in Today's Society

Lung disease is a disorder where lung function is impaired. Anyone can develop a lung disease for any number of reasons. You could be a smoker, inhaling a toxic mix of chemicals daily. You could be working at a job site that exposes you to the deadly fibres of asbestos. You could contract pneumonia, leaving scar tissue in your airways. Or, you could have been born with highly sensitive airways, making you susceptible to pollens and allergens.

While studies show that people tend to be more concerned about heart attacks and strokes, lung diseases are far more serious. They kill more people than any other disease worldwide. Moreover, the death rates due to lung disease are still rising, while death rates from other leading causes of death, such as heart disease and stroke, are going down.

Why the increase? First, lung function declines as we get older, putting our aging population at an increased risk of lung infections. Second, the cumulative effects of smoking are beginning to be felt in the general population. Finally, worldwide increases in the incidences of asthma and allergies have been linked to global climate change.

The Global Link

Experts suggest that rising temperatures and worsening ozone levels in urban areas can cause all kinds of potential respiratory problems. Higher surface temperatures, for example, can promote the formation of greater amounts of ground-level ozone, which can exacerbate asthma and acute lower-respiratory disease, while longer growing seasons for plants create more allergen-inducing pollens.

Put your Lungs to the Test

Obviously you can't control factors such as global warming, but you can start taking proactive steps to protect your lungs by gaining a better understanding of your breathing problem, along with an accurate diagnosis and effective treatment. Doctors diagnose breathing problems by performing a physical exam, taking your medical history, and conducting different breathing tests.

Spirometry is one of the most common and simplest breathing tests. Generally used to diagnose Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and asthma, it can determine the amount of airway obstruction you have by measuring how much air you can blow out of your lungs and how fast you can blow it.

A methacholine challenge test may also be performed to diagnose asthma. It involves inhaling increasing amounts of methacholine mist to evaluate lung function.

Paying attention to any changes with your breathing can keep a problem from becoming too serious. If a wheezing cough persists for too long, for example, see your doctor. Last but not least, it's vital for anyone with lung disease to quit smoking. It's never too late, and if one stop-smoking effort doesn't work, try another. Not only will you be doing good things for your lungs, less second-hand smoke can help others breathe easier.

Lung Disease

There are many types of lung diseases, some of which contain a combination of two or three types. The most common types include:

Obstructive airway diseases—These affect the airways that carry oxygen in and out of the lungs. The airways either become too narrow or there is a blockage that limits the flow of air, making breathing laboured and difficult. Examples include asthma, emphysema and chronic bronchitis.

Infectious lung diseases—These occur when viruses or bacteria infect the membrane (or pleura) that surrounds the lungs. Examples include pneumonia, influenza, and tuberculosis (TB).

Respiratory Failure—This can be caused by problems with the normal gas exchange and blood flow in the lungs. Examples include pulmonary edema, pulmonary embolism and pulmonary hypertension.

Lung cancer—This often deadly disease is characterized by uncontrolled growth and spread of abnormal cells.

Lung tissue diseases—These diseases cause stiffening and scarring of the lungs making it harder to exhale carbon dioxide from the body. Examples include pulmonary fibrosis and sarcoidosis.

Occupational diseases—These occur when occupational dusts and chemicals (vapors, irritants fibres and fumes) affect the lungs. An example is asbestosis.

Of these, asthma is now the most common respiratory disease in Canada, with about 2.7 million cases.

Remember—simple lung tests can help your doctor identify lung problems early on, when treatment is most effective. Your FHCP pharmacist can also work with you by recommending products and lifestyle strategies to manage your condition.

Asthma

Asthma is caused by hyperactive, or "twitchy" bronchial tubes, which are oversensitive to triggers such as airborne allergens, cold air, emotional stress and even certain foods. When an asthma attack hits, the muscle walls of the bronchial tubes go into spasms, and the air passages narrow, constricting the free flow of air. The result is wheezing, coughing and breathlessness.

Chronic asthma is treated with prescription medications such as bronchodilators and corticosteroids that reduce inflammation and bring the medicine directly into your lungs. There are many types of inhaler devices that are often used together to control your symptoms.

If you're not quite sure how to use your inhaler, you're not alone. Most people don't know how to use their inhaler. Your FHCP pharmacist can help you with techniques like appropriate aim so the drug can reach all the nooks and crannies in your lungs.

Exercise-induced asthma?

Regular aerobic exercise has been shown to improve asthma by opening up your airways and working your diaphragm muscles. But many asthma sufferers start to wheeze when they start exercising. The solution? Try using your inhaler about five to ten minutes before you start exercising. Also, don't exercise in cold or polluted air.



Respiratory Health

COPD

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) is an umbrella term used to describe chronic lung diseases that cause limitations to lung airflow. It includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis. The most common symptom is shortness of breath, a condition so restricting that many sufferers describe it as “breathing through a straw.” Other symptoms include a chronic cough and chronic sputum production. Smoking is almost always the cause.



Unfortunately there is no cure for COPD. Once the damage is done to the lung tissues, it's permanent and progressive. In fact, COPD is expected to become the third leading cause of death by 2020. Luckily there is much you can do to slow down the progression.

No surprise—quitting smoking is the most effective method of slowing down the progression of the disease and preventing further damage to the lungs. While medications cannot cure COPD, they can improve your symptoms.

Different types of COPD medications include bronchodilators to help open the airways for increased air flow, and combination medicines and corticosteroids to prevent and treat flare-ups. In some cases you may need supplemental oxygen. Your FHCP pharmacist can help you understand which medications you are taking and how and when to take them.

Sleep Apnea

Sleep apnea is a potentially serious sleep disorder that causes a person to stop breathing repeatedly during their sleep. The most common type is obstructive sleep apnea, which occurs when your throat muscles intermittently relax and block your airway during sleep. When this happens, your airway narrows or closes as you inhale and breathing may be inadequate for 10 to 20 seconds. This pattern can repeat itself hundreds of times during the night, which means your brain and body may not get enough oxygen. The most noticeable sign of obstructive sleep apnea is loud snoring.



While anyone can develop sleep apnea, it usually affects people who are overweight or those who have a nasal obstruction due to a deviated septum, allergies or sinus problems.

Certain medications, particularly sedatives, may also worsen your sleep apnea, so be sure to ask your FHCP pharmacist about them.

Usually sleep apnea just results in daytime fatigue. But if left untreated, it can result in heart failure, irregular heartbeat or heart attack. This is because the sudden drops in blood oxygen levels increase blood pressure and strain your cardiovascular system.

Treatment of sleep apnea depends on its severity. For milder cases, your doctor may recommend losing weight, sleeping on your side and using a saline nasal spray to keep your nasal passages open while you sleep.

Treatment may also involve using a mouthpiece to thrust your jaw forward during sleep or using a device to keep your airway open. In extreme cases, some people undergo surgery to change the structure of their nose, throat or mouth.

Tuberculosis

Tuberculosis (TB) is a lung infection caused by a slow-growing bacterium. While many of us think of it as an old-fashioned disease, it's made a comeback and is considered a modern global epidemic.

TB is very contagious. Like the common cold, it spreads through the air via sneezing or coughing. Just because you're infected with the bacteria doesn't automatically mean you'll get sick. Only one in ten infected people will develop the disease. For this reason, doctors classify it in one of two ways:

Latent TB. This means that you have a TB infection but the bacteria remains in your body in a non-contagious state and causes no symptoms. However, it can turn into active TB, so treatment is important to help control the spread.

Active TB. The active form makes you sick and can spread to others. It can occur in the first few weeks after infection with the TB bacteria or it might occur years later.

Signs and symptoms of active TB include:

- Cough
- Unintentional weight loss
- Fatigue
- Fever
- Night sweats
- Chills
- Loss of appetite

Treatment with antibiotics is often successful, but it's often a long process. It generally takes about six to nine months to treat TB, but in some cases, the infection may take two years to treat. Moreover, you could develop resistance to your antibiotic if you take it for a while and then stop. Be sure to follow your doctor's treatment plan exactly as prescribed.

Are you at risk?

Those at risk for TB include anyone with HIV or any other illnesses that weaken the immune system, people working in crowded places such as nursing homes, or those who travel to places where untreated TB is common such as Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe.

Q & A

Ask Your Helpful FHCP Pharmacist

Q. How can I tell if I have asthma or allergies?

The best way to find out is with skin prick tests. Various allergens, such as animal dander and pollen, are pricked into your skin and if a hive develops you're allergic to that substance. Oftentimes, people have a combination of allergies and asthma. Your doctor may also test your lung function with a machine called a spirometer that measures the total amount of air you breathe and how fast.

Q. I find all the varieties of cough medicine confusing. Which is best for a cough?

It depends what kind you have. If it's a dry, hacking cough, you need to suppress it. However, if you're bringing up phlegm every time you cough, you have a productive cough that is actually good for you because it's your body's way of getting rid of infectious agents. So you don't want to suppress it entirely. Look for cough medicines with secretion-loosening ingredients such as guaifenesin. Drinking lots of water or consuming clear, hot fluids such as soup or tea can also help to make that thick mucus easier to cough up.

Q. What can I do about my chronic sinus problems?

Medications can help, but the wrong ones can also make the problem worse. A decongestant such as pseudoephedrine is helpful, because it alleviates pressure in your sinuses, check with your pharmacist before taking anything if you have any respiratory illnesses. Antihistamines, on the other hand, thicken mucus. The thicker the mucus, the harder it is to drain from the sinuses. You can also help flush the sinuses by irrigating them with a commercial saltwater spray mist. If the problem still doesn't go away, your doctor might recommend a course of antibiotics.



A Healthy Position

Common allergies

An allergy occurs when your immune system mistakes an otherwise harmless substance as an invader. When that happens, it overreacts, releasing chemicals that cause symptoms such as nasal congestion, sneezing and itchy, watery eyes. Pollen, dust mites, mold and animal dander are the most common allergens.

Getting allergy relief depends on how badly they affect you. In some cases, it may be a simple matter of staying indoors on days when the pollen count is high. Over-the-counter and prescription remedies such as oral and nasal decongestants are also options.

Steaming away the sneezing

Your respiratory tract is particularly vulnerable to dryness, which is why many doctors recommend vaporization for allergies. Vaporizers work by heating water until it turns into a hot, moist steam that moistens your nasal tissues and loosens congestion.

Germes thrive in moist environments, so it's important to clean your vaporizer every three days to prevent the build-up of allergy causing molds. Rinse it with a 50-50 solution of vinegar and water, or a weak bleach solution made from one teaspoon of bleach and one quart of water. If you have any questions, remember, your FHCP pharmacist is always there for you.

Take The Check-Up Challenge

Don't ignore an annoying cough that goes on for too long. If you've had a cough that lasts for three weeks or longer and it's not improving, it could be a symptom of a more serious underlying problem. Get it checked out.

Ask About Our Preferred® Private Label Products

Next Month's Feature!

JUNE 2014

Men's Health

Like women, many of men's health issues are linked to their hormones. The hormone testosterone plays a huge role throughout a man's life, helping to maintain important bodily functions such as fat distribution, bone density, red blood cell production and sex drive. Because it affects so many functions, its decrease can put a serious damper on your physical and emotional well-being. Fortunately there is much you can do to protect your health.

In Next Month's Feature Find Out More About:

- Prostate problems
- Cholesterol issues
- Sexual health
- Alcohol consumption and liver disease

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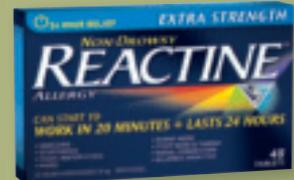
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