



HEALTH AWARENESS

Constant Cough? Short Of Breath? It Might Be COPD

(NAPSA)—Here's information that may save your life.

If you or someone you know has a constant cough or what's sometimes referred to as "smoker's cough," you or that person may be at risk for COPD, a serious lung disease that over time makes it hard to breathe. Other symptoms include feeling like you can't breathe or can't catch your breath. You might get short of breath doing simple activities you used to be able to do, like climb a short flight of stairs or walk to the mailbox. It's also more common among current and former smokers.

More than 12 million Americans are currently diagnosed with COPD and an additional 12 million may have the disease and not even know it, according to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI). In fact, COPD is the fourth-leading cause of death in the U.S., claiming 120,000 lives each year. Yet few people have ever heard of it, let alone know what it is.

With COPD, the airways of the lungs are narrowed, making it hard to get air out and causing an "out of breath" feeling. Most people with COPD are over 40 with a history of smoking or long-term exposure to fumes or pollutants in the environment. In some cases, COPD has a genetic cause.

"The first step toward better breathing is recognizing the symptoms and getting an accurate



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diagnosis. A simple breathing test called spirometry can be done right in your doctor's office to determine if you have COPD," said James P. Kiley, Ph.D., of NHLBI. The test involves breathing out as hard and fast as you can into a tube connected to a machine that measures your lung function.

If you are diagnosed with COPD, there is hope. Many treatments are available to reduce symptoms, improve breathing and help you get back to doing more of what you used to do.

You can find out more at www.LearnAboutCOPD.org, part of the NHLBI's *COPD Learn More Breathe Better* education and awareness campaign.