

HEALTH NEWS

Nebulizers Ease Emphysema, Chronic Bronchitis

(NAPSA)—Nebulization offers an easy, time-tested way to relieve the symptoms of emphysema or chronic bronchitis, also known as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). More than 12 million Americans have been diagnosed with COPD—and an estimated 12 million more have COPD but don't even know it.

The Problem

COPD is the fourth-leading cause of death in America, behind heart disease, cancer and stroke. Although it's a chronic and progressive disease, proper treatment can reduce symptoms and make patients' lives more comfortable.

The Solutions

Among the most commonly used treatments are bronchodilators, which work by relaxing the muscles around the airways. Bronchodilators, which work best when inhaled, can be either long acting (for maintenance) or short acting (for quick relief). They can be taken three different ways: through nebulizers, dry-powder inhalers (DPI) or metered-dose inhalers (MDI)—and just how a patient takes COPD medicine can make a big difference in how he or she feels.

DPIs are handheld devices that release dry medicine through the mouth and into the lungs when the patient takes and holds a deep breath. However, using DPIs may sometimes be difficult for COPD patients who cannot inhale deeply.

MDIs, which are also handheld devices, use a propellant to deliver the medicine in short bursts through the mouth and into the lungs. Although MDIs don't require holding in a deep breath, they do demand a specific coordinated technique to get a full dose of medicine. COPD patients may find MDI technique difficult to master, leaving them without a full dose of medicine.

For many, nebulizers may offer a reliable and easy way to take



COPD is a condition that blocks the lungs. Patients can use nebulization to supply the medicine they need to open air passages.

bronchodilator medicine, since they require only simple, normal breathing. Nebulizers convert liquid medicine into a cool, fine mist that the patient simply breathes in through a mouthpiece or face mask. Nebulization brings medicine directly into the lungs gently and thoroughly, without the need for any special techniques.

"More people need to know about COPD and they also need to learn about the different treatments that doctors can prescribe for it," said John Walsh, president of the COPD Foundation. "Because COPD blocks the airways that carry air in and out of the lungs, patients rely on medicine that can open up these passages. Nebulization is a time-tested way to do this—it's easy, simple and effective. COPD patients and their caregivers should consider asking their doctor whether nebulized medicine would improve their symptom control."

Free Kit

A new, free resource kit is available for COPD caregivers. It explains about COPD and its treatments and offers important tips on helping someone living with COPD. For free copies of "Caring for Someone With Emphysema or Chronic Bronchitis," call the COPD Foundation Call Center at (866) 316-COPD or visit www.copdfoundation.org.