

HEALTH ALERT!

The Changing Face Of COPD

(NAPSA)—Women may benefit from learning more about COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), now the fourth-leading cause of death in the United States.

It's more important than ever before because more women are now affected by the disease. A report released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) shows that COPD mortality rates are rising even faster among women than men, partly due to women's later surge in smoking, a leading risk factor for COPD, and partly due to an increase among those who have never smoked.

If this trend continues, the CDC projects COPD to become the third-leading cause of death worldwide by 2030.

"The typical patient with COPD is just as likely now to be a woman as a man," said James P. Kiley, Ph.D., of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) of the National Institutes of Health. "Women need to be aware of their risk for COPD."

COPD kills more than 120,000 Americans each year. The NHLBI estimates that half of the 24 million living with COPD do not know they have the disease. Most people with COPD are over 40 with a history of smoking or long-term exposure to fumes or pollutants in the environment. With COPD, the airways of the lungs are narrowed, making it hard to get air out and causing an "out of breath" feeling. Other symptoms



Once thought of as a disease affecting older men, COPD now kills and hospitalizes more women than men every year.

include frequent coughing, excess mucus and wheezing.

If you think you might be at risk for COPD, the NHLBI recommends that you ask your doctor about a simple breathing test called spirometry. The lung function test involves breathing out as hard and fast as you can into a tube connected to a machine, and it can be done right in your doctor's office.

If you find out you have 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.