



## When Breathing Isn't Easy: Understanding a Fatal Lung Disease

(NAPSA)—For most of us, breathing is a routine action that we don't give much thought. But imagine feeling like you are suffocating every day, and you can never seem to get enough air. This is what daily life is like for the 50,000 to 70,000 people<sup>1</sup> in the United States who are living with a fatal lung disease<sup>2</sup> called idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF). While people with IPF may appear healthy, inside their lungs are deteriorating irreversibly—and they are losing the ability to breathe.

IPF is not a widely known disease, yet its incidence is higher than ovarian cancer and nearly 30 times that of cystic fibrosis.<sup>3</sup> In the United States each year, 15,000 to 20,000 people are diagnosed with mild-to-moderate IPF,<sup>4</sup> a majority of whom are age 50 or older.<sup>4</sup> Doctors do not yet know what causes IPF. What they do know is that it is an irreversible, unpredictable disease that causes permanent lung damage and involves progressive scarring, or “fibrosis,” of the lungs. This lung scarring<sup>5</sup> makes it difficult for muscles, the heart and other organs to get the oxygen they need to work properly.<sup>6,7</sup> As a



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result, shortness of breath, chronic dry cough and exhaustion are all common symptoms of this debilitating disease.<sup>7</sup>

As breathing becomes increasingly difficult, IPF disrupts the daily lives of people with the disease as well as those who care for them. For most IPF patients, activities such as walking or even climbing stairs becomes more difficult over time.<sup>7</sup> Many are only able to exert themselves for 15–20 minutes at a time, and must take frequent rests throughout the day.<sup>7</sup> They face a daily struggle to breathe, knowing that they face an average life expectancy of only two to five years after diagnosis.<sup>7</sup>

It can take months or years for people with IPF to be properly diagnosed. Many people are mis-

diagnosed, until they eventually receive the lung-function tests and an HRCT (high-resolution computed tomography) scan that can help confirm a diagnosis.<sup>8</sup>

Although no medicines are approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to treat IPF, some therapies are currently being studied. In the meantime, doctors can help their patients manage IPF symptoms<sup>9</sup> by prescribing supplemental oxygen therapy and medicines that help with coughing and breathlessness.<sup>10</sup>

## KNOW IPF NOW™

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**September is Pulmonary Fibrosis Awareness Month.**

September is Pulmonary Fibrosis Awareness Month—a time to better understand this disease and advocate for the thousands of patients living with IPF, and to help increase awareness of this relatively unknown disease that so deeply affects people and their families.

**To learn more about IPF, visit [KnowIPFNow.com](http://KnowIPFNow.com).**

<sup>1</sup> Know IPF Now | Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis. Know IPF Now. Web. 08 Aug. 2014. <https://knowipfnw.com/about/who-has-ipf/>.

<sup>2</sup> About IPF RALLY. IPF RALLY. Web. 08 Aug. 2014. <https://www.ipfrally.com/about-ipf-rally>.

<sup>3</sup> Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis. InterMune. Web. 08 Aug. 2014. [http://www.intermune.com/idiopathic\\_pulmonary\\_fibrosis](http://www.intermune.com/idiopathic_pulmonary_fibrosis).

<sup>4</sup> Know IPF Now | Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis. Know IPF Now. Web. 08 Aug. 2014. <https://knowipfnw.com/about/signs-and-symptoms/>.

<sup>5</sup> Know IPF Now | Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis. Know IPF Now. Web. 08 Aug. 2014. <https://knowipfnw.com/faq-glossary/>.

<sup>6</sup> Know IPF Now | Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis. Know IPF Now. Web. 08 Aug. 2014. <https://knowipfnw.com/about/learn-about-ipf/>.

<sup>7</sup> Know IPF Now | Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis. Know IPF Now. Web. 08 Aug. 2014. <https://knowipfnw.com/about/signs-and-symptoms/>.

<sup>8</sup> Know IPF Now | Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis. Know IPF Now. Web. 08 Aug. 2014. <https://knowipfnw.com/about/diagnosis-and-tests/>.

<sup>9</sup> Treatment Options. Treatment Options. Web. 08 Aug. 2014. <http://www.pulmonaryfibrosis.org/life-with-pf/pulmonary-fibrosis-treatment-options>.

<sup>10</sup> Know IPF Now | Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis. Know IPF Now. Web. 08 Aug. 2014. <https://knowipfnw.com/living/managing-ipf-symptoms/>.