



A publication of the Brown Medicine
Geriatrics Division 401-649-4010

Did you know?

Brown Medicine Geriatrics is currently offering access to on-call physicians via Televisits, in-person wellness and in-person sick visits, Monday through Friday.

Please call 401-649-4010 for more information and/or to schedule an appointment.

Weekend Urgent Care Visits for Primary Care Patients

Until further notice, there are no weekend urgent care visits or walk-in appointments at this time. Brown Medicine Geriatrics has an on-call doctor available 24 hours/day – 7 days/week to assist you.

Please call Geriatrics Primary Care to schedule an appointment in advance: 401-649-4010

3 ways to get the Geriatrics Newsletter:

1. Online at: Brownmed.org/division-of-geriatrics-and-palliative-medicine
2. Email: Send an email to Karolyn.McKay@Brownphysicians.org to opt-in or fill out a form at the Geriatrics office
3. Mail: Fill out form at the Geriatrics office and include your address

COPD: What does it mean for you?

What is COPD?

COPD is an abbreviation for “Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease.” It is chronic, meaning that it is usually progressive and does not go away. It is obstructive because the airways are like pipes and if there is a narrowing or blockage, it causes an obstruction and air cannot flow through. Pulmonary refers to the lungs (particularly the lower parts of the lung).

What causes COPD?

In 80% of the cases, smoking (either from personal smoking or extensive secondhand smoke) is the cause of COPD. Occasionally, chemical or smoke exposure at work or a long history of asthma can cause COPD. Rarely, it is due to a genetic or family history.

What happens in the lungs?

In the airways of the lungs, there is chronic inflammation resulting in thickening of tubes. This leads to destruction of healthy tissues which is replaced with scar tissue. The airways collapse and become clogged up with secretions. At the end of the airways are air sacs which become fewer in number and larger. They can even become enlarged resulting in large pockets of air which take up space in the lungs and worsen breathing. These changes often result in over-expansion of the lungs.

How will it progress?

We don't usually know how one individual will progress. It is different for every person. Although the damage cannot usually be reversed, the symptoms can often be controlled or improved. It is essential to lower the exposure to tobacco smoke and environmental irritants.

In a healthy non-smoking individual, there is a decline in lung function about 1% per year after age 30. Among smokers, the decline is worse but can be even worse if you are susceptible to smoke damage. If someone stops smoking, the decline in lung function decreases back to if you were a non-smoker.

There are normal aging changes which affect lung function in all individuals. Older people have decreased ability to handle stress to the lung, they are weaker, they have changes in their chest wall that impair breathing deeply, and they cannot sense low oxygen levels.

Also, older adults have other chronic conditions which can affect their lungs, they typically take medications which can affect breathing, and also often overweight or underweight.

What can I do?

There are lots of things you can do to manage COPD. The most important is to avoid smoking or secondhand smoke altogether. It is important to control your nasal allergies and treat colds/respiratory infections quickly. You should avoid pollutants (smoke, dust) and avoid outdoor activities if air quality is poor. That being said, it is important to have healthy habits such as staying active, taking your medications as prescribed, and heeding all COVID-19 recommendations. It is also very important to get your yearly flu vaccine.



COPD Inhaler Importance:

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, better known as COPD, is a chronic disease that is often preventable and treatable. There is no cure, but there are many successful treatments. Most patients with COPD are prescribed at least one inhaler from their doctor. These inhalers are important in helping to open your airways, keep them open, and prevent inflammation, depending on the combination of drugs within the inhaler and based on the severity of your COPD. Maintenance inhalers are designed to be used daily to help with COPD, even if you feel just fine. Many patients have rescue inhalers, including albuterol inhalers, which are used on an “as needed” basis. It is important to recognize which inhaler is used daily, and which one is used “as needed” for when you are wheezing or short of breath.

Understanding how to use your inhaler properly is important, as poor techniques can lead to worsening COPD and could lead to a hospital stay. Almost 90% of people using inhalers have used their inhaler incorrectly. Some incorrect techniques include forgetting to shake or prime the inhaler, holding the inhaler incorrectly, failing to breathe out enough air from your lungs before your puff, incorrect timing with breathing in, not breathing in quickly enough, or not holding your breath long enough to get the full dose. Be sure to check with your care team or pharmacist about the best ways to use each of your inhalers. Each inhaler may be different, so understanding how to use the one prescribed for you may help save your life.

~ Austin Faria, Pharm.D., RPh

Did You Know?



More than 1 in 10 Rhode Islanders are living with diabetes. More than 1 in 3 Rhode Islanders are living with prediabetes or are at risk of developing diabetes. Many (90%) don't even know it.

On November 14, 2020, Rhode Island will participate in an annual World Diabetes Day event. Rhode Island World Diabetes Day aims to raise awareness of diabetes. The virtual event also aims to help Rhode Islanders reduce their risk of diabetes or its impact on their lives.

To register, visit: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/rhode-island-world-diabetes-day-tickets-119616854231>

Get your Flu Shot: so the flu doesn't get you!



Two ways to receive your flu vaccine this year:

1. Schedule a visit with your Primary Care Physician's office.
2. Contact your local Pharmacy to schedule an appointment or check walk-in availability.

Help Find a Vaccine for COVID-19

We are looking for:

- People with underlying medical conditions
- People with greater chances of exposure at their job
- People who live or work in elder-care facilities
- People over age 65
- People from racial and ethnic groups that have been impacted in greater numbers by the epidemic, such as African Americans, Latinx, and Native Americans



If you decide to join a COVID-19 prevention study, you will be compensated for your time.

To Participate in Vaccine Trials:

Sign up to volunteer for a vaccine at www.coronaviruspreventionnetwork.org Use the **SITE CODE: LIFE**

You can also register by contacting IDResearch@lifespan.org or by phone: (401) 793-4317

Vaccine Trial Interviews:

Dr. Karen Toshima newspaper article: providencejournal.com/news/20200917/lifespan-seeks-rhode-islanders-willing-to-participate-in-vaccine-trials

Dr. Martha Sanchez interview with Dr. Pablo Rodriguez in Spanish on all things COVID and a vaccine: <https://www.facebook.com/RhodeInformaLive/videos/237338967694584/>

Dr. Karen Toshima Podcast: <http://www.brownmed.org/news/brown-medicine-healthtalk-podcast-covid-19-vaccine-trial/>



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