

Caregiver Assistance News

“Caring for You - Caring for Others”

Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.

*Serving Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence,
Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton Counties in Ohio*

www.aaa7.org **Helping You Age Better!**

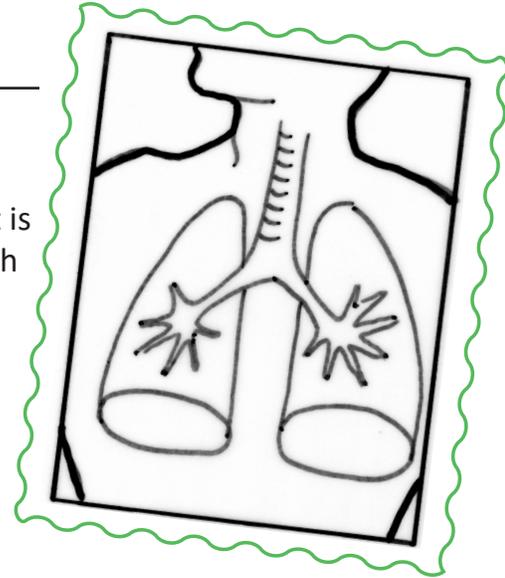


MARCH 2021

COVID-19 and Lung Disease

Having a chronic lung disease means that a person may be in the high-risk category for severe illness and complications from COVID-19. Therefore, it is important to follow all the guidelines to minimize the risk of infection, such as staying home to be physically distanced from others, washing hands, and using hand sanitizer. Don't touch your face and when you must go out—wear a mask.

The COVID-19 virus can damage the lungs, heart and brain, increasing the risk of persistent health problems. COVID-19 can scar the lungs' tiny air sacs and cause long-term breathing difficulty even if the scars partially heal.



Lung Health Emergencies

If the person in your care is having a flare-up from lung disease or experiencing new symptoms, call the doctor. During this time of COVID-19, it is more important than ever to maintain control of chronic lung disease, including taking medications as prescribed.

When lung disease (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease - COPD) progresses to the point that the lungs can't supply enough oxygen to meet the needs of the body, the doctor may prescribe home oxygen therapy. Symptoms that show oxygen may be needed include:

- excessive sleepiness
- morning headaches and irritability
- poor concentration
- worsening shortness of breath
- swelling of the feet, ankles and legs

Some people think that using oxygen will reduce their independence, or they will become addicted to it. However, oxygen therapy can greatly improve energy levels, the ability to breathe, and overall quality of life. Using this therapy can add years to a person's life. The doctor will use various tests to find out when, and how much, oxygen is needed.

Oxygen Containers

Oxygen comes in different kinds of containers and is given through soft prongs inserted into the nose, or through a tube inserted surgically directly into the throat.

Liquid Oxygen—oxygen is stored as a very cold liquid in a container like a thermos. When released, the liquid changes to a gas that is breathed like compressed gas. The liquid can be transferred to small portable containers. Liquid oxygen is more expensive than compressed gas.

Concentrator—this electrically-powered device separates the oxygen from the air, concentrates it, and then stores it. A tank of oxygen is needed in case of power failures.

Oxygen Tanks—oxygen is stored under pressure in a tank with a regulator that controls the oxygen flow rate. The tanks can be large or portable.

The doctor will prescribe a specific flow rate of oxygen, and you will need to make sure that not too much, or too little, is given. Different flow rates may be given for sleeping and when active. Care must be taken to avoid having anything flammable in the room where the oxygen container is kept, such as a cigarette lighter or gas range.



Belly Breathing and Pursed-Lip Breathing

Diaphragmatic breathing, also known as belly breathing, helps a person to relax and get more air out of the lungs. Have the person in your care practice this breathing technique by sitting in a comfortable chair or lying down. Have the person place one hand on their abdomen and one hand on their chest. As they breathe in, have them notice how the abdominal muscles relax and then, as they exhale, tell them to tighten the abdominal muscles to help push air out. The chest should not move. The exhalation (breathing out) should always take longer than the inhalation (breathing in). It is very important that the person in your care does these exercises while calm and relaxed so that they will be able to get into the habit of breathing this way.

Pursed-lip breathing helps to keep the breathing tubes open during exhalation and to improve the ability to slowly get more air out of the lungs. This type of breathing is used mainly for people with COPD (emphysema or bronchitis). To practice this technique, have the person in your care take a breath in through the nose and slowly let the breath out through pursed lips (as if they were whistling). Pursed-lip breathing and belly breathing are done together.



Taking Care of Yourself

Caring for Adult Children - Know Your Limits

Sometimes, because an accident left a child disabled, parents must continue to care for their children long after the child moves into adulthood. Maybe the adult child suffers from progressive conditions such as multiple sclerosis or Huntington’s disease, or has developmental disabilities.

As you age, it will be more difficult to give the same level of care that you once did. Be careful if caregiving is taking a physical toll on your health and realize your physical limitations and ask for help. Call your local Area Agency on Aging at 1-800-582-7277 to find out about respite programs in your area.



Telephone Caregiver Support Group

March 18th from 1:30 pm - 2:30 pm

If you are interested in this free support, please call Vicki Woyan for more details.

1-800-582-7277, ext. 215
e-mail info@aaa7.org.



HEAP **Home Energy** **Assistance Program**

Now open for applications for 2020-2021.
 This program can help eligible Ohioans manage their heating bills. Applications are available from your local Community Action Agency

If interested or if you have questions, contact your county Community Action Agency or the AAA7 Resource Center at 1-800-582-7277.

Conserve Energy!

People with COPD must conserve their energy so they won't become exhausted. Encourage the person to:

- take it easy; move slowly
- sit while doing chores
- avoid lifting and bending; keep household items within easy reach
- rest after eating
- use a cart with wheels to carry things
- use helping devices such as a long-handled reacher or long-handled tongs
- use a bath bench and hand-held shower head in the bathtub

Memory Care

Practice Patience - if the person in your care repeats the same story over and over, take pleasure in how much they enjoy the story, rather than being frustrated because you have heard it before.

Safety Tips - Avoiding Irritants

People with COPD may be affected by irritating substances in the air, or they may have allergies to airborne allergens (substances that are carried on the air that cause allergic reactions like sneezing or watery eyes) such as pollen. Any kind of air pollution inside or outside of the home should be avoided, including dust, smoke, fumes from wood or coal-burning stoves, and strong odors in general. Some people are highly allergic to mold and may have trouble breathing if they are exposed to it.



The most important thing a person with lung disease can do is STOP SMOKING. Smoking is the number one cause of COPD and can make any kind of lung disease worse. Medications are available that can help a person stop smoking (such as the “patch”). Sometimes, even multiple medications may be needed. Eating a healthy diet, drinking plenty of water and juice, and taking vitamin supplements can make withdrawal easier and less uncomfortable.

Some content in this publication is excerpted from The Comfort of Home: Caregivers Series. It is for informational use and not health advice. It is not meant to replace medical care but to supplement it. The publisher assumes no liability with respect to the accuracy, completeness or application of information presented or the reader's misunderstanding of the text.



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Your local Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc. serves the following counties in Ohio: Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton. Services are rendered on a non-discriminatory basis. Those interested in learning more about the services provided through the Area Agency on Aging District 7 can call toll-free at 1-800-582-7277. Here, individuals can talk directly with a trained Resource Specialist who will assist them with information surrounding the programs and services that are available to best serve their needs.

The Agency can also be reached via e-mail at info@aaa7.org.