Today’s Session Will Cover

- Definition of COPD
- How COPD affects breathing
- Symptoms of COPD
- How you can find out if you are at risk
- Talking to your doctor
- Getting on the road to better lung health
- Resources
What is COPD?

- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease
- Serious lung disease that over time makes it hard to breathe
  - Emphysema
  - Chronic Bronchitis
- Blocked (obstructed) airways make it hard to get air in and out
Did You Know?

• 4th leading cause of death
  – Kills more than 120,000 people per year
• 2nd leading cause of disability
• 12 million+ have COPD
• Another 12 million may have it but don’t know it
How Does COPD Affect Breathing?
What Are the Symptoms?

- Coughing - “smoker’s cough”
- Shortness of breath
- Excess sputum or phlegm
- Feeling like you can’t breathe
- Can’t take deep breath
- Wheezing
Symptoms

When it’s hard to breathe, it’s hard to do anything

• People with COPD:
  – avoid activities that they used to do more easily
  – limit activity to accommodate shortness of breath and other symptoms. Some activities include:
    • Take elevator instead of stairs.
    • Park close by instead of walking.
    • Avoid shopping or other similar day-to-day tasks.
    • Stay home rather than go out with friends.
Are You At Risk?

• Smoking
  – Most common cause, however, as many of 1 out of 6 people with COPD never smoked

• Environmental exposure
  – Chemicals, dusts, fumes
  – Secondhand smoke, pollutants

• Genetic Factor
  – Alpha-1 antitrypsin (AAT) deficiency
Getting a Simple Breathing Test

• Talk with your doctor!
• Simple breathing test
  – Spirometry
• Quick and noninvasive
• Can tell if you have COPD and how severe it is
Treatments Can Help

• Lifestyle changes
  – Quit smoking. It’s never too late.  
    (www.smokefree.gov)
• Medications
• Pulmonary rehabilitation
• Physical activity training
• Oxygen treatment
• Surgery

COPD Learn More Breathe Better
www.LearnAboutCOPD.org
Start Today

• Talk with doctor about your risks, such as smoking and other exposures
• Tell your doctor about any symptoms
• Write down a list of questions
There Are Many Things You Can Do

- Quit smoking—Many new options available from your doctor
- Avoid exposure to pollutants and secondhand smoke
- Visit your doctor regularly
- Follow treatment advice
- Get annual flu and pneumonia shots
Common Myths–
Don’t Believe Them

• “My shortness of breath is just old age.”
• “There’s nothing my doctor can do except tell me to quit smoking.”
• “If I rest more, it will get better.”

COPD Learn More
Breathe Better
www.LearnAboutCOPD.org
It All Begins With You

• Start today
• Be your own advocate—ask questions and seek information.
Learn More Breathe Better

www.LearnAboutCOPD.org

or

NHLBI Health Information Center
P.O. Box 30105
Bethesda, MD 20824-0105
Phone: 301-592-8573
TTY: 240-629-3255
Fax: 301-592-8563
E-mail: NHLBlinfo@nhlbi.nih.gov
Web site: www.nhlbi.nih.gov