

COPD

LEARN MORE BREATHE BETTER®

A program of the National Institutes of Health.



TALKING WITH YOUR PATIENTS ABOUT COPD.

HELP YOUR PATIENTS BY LEADING THE DISCUSSION.

Providers must often take the lead in recognizing and helping patients overcome some common communications barriers. This helps achieve provider-patient dialogue in the exam room that facilitates early diagnosis, treatment and improved quality of life.

1 IN 3 AMERICANS REMAIN UNAWARE OF COPD.

Despite recent gains in awareness and the fact that COPD is now the third leading cause of death in the United States, millions still have not heard of COPD or its symptoms.

Barrier Breakers: Incorporate educational materials such as posters, brochures or videos in the exam and waiting rooms. Refer patients to the **COPD Learn More Breathe Better website:** COPD.nhlbi.nih.gov, the **COPD Foundation website:** www.copdfoundation.org or their toll-free **COPD Information Line:** 1-866-316-COPD (2673).

PATIENTS HESITATE TO TELL YOU THEIR SYMPTOMS.

Nearly half of all primary care physicians say the biggest barrier to COPD diagnosis is that patients do not fully report their symptoms. One quarter of patients who say they have experienced common COPD symptoms say they haven't mentioned these symptoms to their provider.

Barrier Breakers: Ask questions and give examples that get your patients talking. Have them visit with your nurse or physician's assistant first. Patients may be more likely to share information or concerns they are unsure of with these individuals first.



BETTER CONVERSATIONS LEAD TO BETTER BREATHING

It's a well-known fact. Good communication between providers and patients is especially important for managing a chronic disease, such as COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease). Studies show that patients who feel they are informed and part of the decision making process are more likely to adhere to a treatment regimen and actively manage their disease.

In a recent survey, almost four in five people who have talked to their doctor about their COPD reported that they understood how to manage their COPD symptoms. Among those people who did not discuss COPD with their providers, only six in ten believe they know how to manage their symptoms.



NIH National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

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WHY AREN'T PATIENTS TALKING?

There are many reasons Americans don't talk to their providers about symptoms. For many, they just don't want to hear another quit smoking message. For others it's financial – they are afraid they will need tests and treatment they cannot afford. For some, the symptoms are not something they think of, they may have had symptoms for a long time and grown used to them – or they may believe these issues will go away on their own in time. Still others keep quiet to avoid hearing they may have a serious health problem.

Barrier Breakers: If you know or suspect your patient is a smoker, let them know that you empathize with how hard it is to quit and refer them to a support group. Let them know that there are ways to manage the symptoms to improve quality of life – but you must know about the symptoms in order to treat them. Refer low-income or uninsured patients to free or low-cost testing.

THE MAJORITY OF PEOPLE AT RISK FOR COPD DOUBT THAT IT CAN BE TREATED.

Less than half of Americans agree with the statement, "COPD is treatable."

Barrier Breakers: Talk with at-risk patients clearly and early on to demystify COPD and overcome misperceptions. To make them aware of symptoms, ask them to keep a daily log and bring it to the next office visit. Be sure to share that although there is no cure for COPD, early diagnosis and proper treatment can improve quality of life.



**COPD Learn More
Breathe Better®**

is a program of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. It was created to help people diagnosed with and at risk for COPD to become informed about the disease and ways to live better with it.

For more information and free, downloadable materials, visit:

COPD.nhlbi.nih.gov

Contact the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute at:

nhlbi.nih.gov