



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Breathe Better

*Deaths from Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease Among Adults Aged >25 Years
— United States, 2000–2005*

Recorded: November 10, 2008; posted: November 13, 2008

[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the MMWR, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or COPD, is a condition that restricts a person's airflow, making it difficult to breathe. It's the fourth leading cause of death in the United States. Air pollutants, like cigarette smoke and occupational dust and chemicals, are the main culprits.

Dr. Janet Croft is an epidemiologist with CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. She's joining us today to discuss COPD. Welcome to the show, Janet.

[Dr. Croft] Hi Bob. Glad to be here.

[Dr. Gaynes] Janet, how many people in the U.S. are affected by COPD each year?

[Dr. Croft] There are 12 million people that are known to be diagnosed with COPD, which includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis. There are another 12 million that don't know they have COPD and have not been diagnosed yet.

[Dr. Gaynes] Well, besides cigarette smoke, what else can cause COPD?

[Dr. Croft] There's air pollution, there's environmental chemicals, smokes, fumes, particularly in some workplaces. Second hand smoke is also a major cause of COPD.

[Dr. Gaynes] Janet, what are the symptoms of COPD? How might somebody know they have it?

[Dr. Croft] Well, if you have any of the following symptoms, you really should see your doctor: constant chronic coughing - that's sometime called a smoker's cough or a hacker's cough - with a lot of mucous production. Or shortness of breath that makes you feel like you can't take a deep breath or you feel like you can't breath when you're doing some of your normal, daily activities or exercising or if you have wheezing.

[Dr. Gaynes] So how is COPD diagnosed?

[Dr. Croft] It's usually diagnosed with a very simple procedure called spirometry. That's where you put a hose in your mouth and you pretend that you're blowing out candles or blowing up a balloon and then it makes a measurement or a graph that the physician can use to diagnose lung function.

[Dr. Gaynes] Janet, how is COPD treated?

[Dr. Croft] First of all, smoking cessation. If you smoke, then you're going to have to quit. Bronchodilators and inhaled steroids are the usual medication that's used to open up the air flow. Pulmonary rehab may be needed to help you learn how to exercise and help you to learn how to do your daily activities. And if you have severe COPD, oxygen treatment or surgery may be required.

[Dr. Gaynes] Is there anything people can do to prevent COPD?

[Dr. Croft] Well, if you smoke, stop. If you don't smoke, don't start. If you work in a workplace that has OSHA regulations about using a mask, use your mask.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information about COPD?

[Dr. Croft] There are two major websites. The first is www.lungusa.org. The second is www.learnaboutcopd.org.

[Dr. Gaynes] I've been talking with Dr. Janet Croft, an epidemiologist with CDC, about COPD. So if you have a constant productive cough and trouble breathing, see your doctor. And most importantly, if you smoke, quit.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.