SPRING IS IN THE AIR!

As we patiently sit through another grey, dull day, we’re all dreaming of those hot, sunny days of spring and summer, right?? Well, as a person with COPD, not always!

The Spring season can also ‘spring’ upon us airborne triggers, weather changes that make breathing symptoms worse…and what about that urge to stir things up with our spring cleaning efforts?

Here are a few tips that will hopefully ease you in to spring…if that nicer weather ever arrives....

SPRING CLEANING

With the change of seasons, comes the desire to do a little cleaning and rearranging. Cleaning is great to help eliminate triggers such as mold, but keep in mind a few things to help your breathing:

- Dusting, vacuuming and cleaning indoors can help keep areas clear of triggers, but can also introduce new ones in your home.
- Ensure good ventilation – open a window to increase air circulation. If you use cleaning products, good ventilation will help to reduce the impact of the strong odors (or better yet, chose scent-free products!)
- Have plans to clean the oven, shampoo the carpets? Why not ask a friend or family member to do this for you – your lungs will thank you!

SEASONAL ALLERGENS

- Along with the season change, comes the possibility that airborne triggers may be present. Pollen, grass, trees, weeds, and flowers can throw triggers in the air that make it difficult to even be outside. This can make sinus congestion worse; can lead to post nasal drip and lung congestion.
- Monitor local allergen levels through local media, or you can check at: www.weather.ca
- You may need to keep windows closed on hot, dry, sunny, windy days to reduce your exposure – this is when outdoor triggers tend to be highest.
- Stay indoors on days when levels of certain triggers for you are
high (certain trees, etc.); use air conditioning!

- Limit your outdoor activities in the early morning when pollen counts are highest.

- As you return to outdoor exercise, start with walking a short, manageable distance and build slowly from there – remember the distance you walk away from your house, you must return that distance home! Carry your rescue inhaler, and a cell phone handy in your pocket is not a bad idea!

**AIR QUALITY AND POLLUTION**

- The quality of the air can greatly affect your daily symptoms. Check local Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) levels through your local media, or the Government of Canada has a link to Environment Canada for more information including local levels here:
  - [http://www.ec.gc.ca/cas-aqhi/default.asp?lang=En&n=CB0ADB16-1](http://www.ec.gc.ca/cas-aqhi/default.asp?lang=En&n=CB0ADB16-1)
  - (‘Environment Canada’ website, under ‘Air Quality Health Index’)
- Consider moving your exercise indoors: walk in the mall, do some laps at an indoor walking track, until the “bad air day” passes!

- Warm, humid, moist air can also be a trigger to increased breathing symptoms. Take your inhaled medications as prescribed, and plan your outdoor activity when the air is comfortable for your breathing. If the weather conditions bother your breathing – listen to your body – take frequent breaks, keep your rescue inhaler handy, have a bottle of water handy for a few sips to keep yourself hydrated, or if it’s just too hot – stay inside and do some walking laps around the house!

**LAWN AND GARDEN MAINTENANCE**

- Fertilizers and freshly cut grass can worsen your symptoms – you may need to consider wearing a particle mask (available at your hardware store!) to help stop breathing in small particles.

- Be aware of mould in ponds and piles of old garden debris (leaves, etc.)

- Lighter fluid and smoke from a barbeque or backyard grill can be a trigger to making your breathing symptoms worse. Stay clear while the grill is heating, and it is a great idea to have a helper in case the fumes or flames from the grill become too much!

- Bug spray and citronella candles may keep those pesky insects away, but the scent can bother your breathing. Chose unscented bug repellant lotions, or try to keep those bugs away by ensuring there is not stale, stagnant water sitting around. Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants and socks to help protect your skin!

The change in seasons often brings a noticeable change in breathing symptoms. Hopefully these few tips will help you to enjoy the escape from winter, and allow you to enjoy the beauty that a fresh new Spring season has to offer!
**Ask The RT**

**Mark Mangus, Sr., BSRC, RRT, RPFT, FAARC**

### Can Symbicort cause sleep problems

Mark,
You've answered many questions about Spiriva and Symbicort lately, but I don't think the one I have. Can Symbicort be causing poor sleep? I have severe COPD but right now am doing pretty well. I've only been taking the Symbicort for about 3 months and it's really improved my breathing, but I wake up often and I seem to have restless sleep. I also sleep with oxygen at night (2) and have been on it for a couple of years. My appt with the doc isn't for another month. Wondering if I should call before then.

Thanks.
Moe

Hi Moe,

Steroid medications 'can' cause disturbed sleep, though it is not often observed with use of inhaled steroids. While I don't think you need to call your doctor or rush to his office, if you are overly concerned about it and really think it might be the steroids, then to contact your doctor is really 'your call'.

Since your breathing is so improved, though, I would suggest you continue to ride it out as the alternative might be much less tolerable than the sleeping difficulties. Another consideration would be to exercise and stay active during the day to help you get tired enough to sleep better. Check to be sure you are not consuming any food substances that might be culpable in disturbing your sleep.

Best Wishes, Mark

### How to tell lung problems from heart problems

Mark, ...I'm on O2 24/7 and have been since my first of three bouts of pneumonia starting last February (prior to that I used it pretty much only at night. I'm on 2 L. O2 and do use an oximeter. I've recently completed a 24 session pulmonary rehab program and was feeling a bit better while doing that 3 times a week. The weather pretty much dictates my outdoor activity and it has been nasty and very cold this past month and though I try to exercise within my home every day it is clearly not enough as I tire quickly. My O2 measure actually improves the more active I am, but will drop quickly at times. I believe the reason my Pulmo doctor stopped the steroid inhaler (I was using Flovent) is because I am on oral steroids with 15mg prednisone a day. How do I find out if it is a heart problem; MORE tests?

Thanks so much. Ann

Hi Ann,

Prednisone causes water retention and 'could' be contributing to your increased edema. As well, since you are on oxygen and do have fluctuating saturations, you could also have 'some' component of heart compromise. In any case, you are correct in suspecting that only additional testing can specifically determine IF you have a heart component to your difficulties AND to what extent and severity it may be. Talk to your doctor about having your heart function evaluated AND about changing from Nebs and ProAir for your maintenance medication routine to a long-acting, beta-agonist inhaler medication. If you can get Symbicort or Advair or even For-moterol or Salmeterol, by themselves, you might not only improve your breathing in the long run, but you may also be able to cut the Proair and severely reduce the number of nebulizers you need to use.

Best Wishes,
Mark

### Editor's note:

These columns are extracted from the COPD Canada main website ([http://copdcanada.ca/](http://copdcanada.ca/)). Look for a link on the left-hand side where you can read previous Q&As or pose your own question.

### Disclaimer:

The responses supplied by Mr. Mangus to your question is intended solely as "general information" only and NOT diagnostic in any fashion. As with anything of a medical nature you should ALWAYS check with your physician.
News from the Board of Directors

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of COPD Canada was held April 25, 2013. Among the highlights of the agenda:

Changes to the bylaws that allow the Board, between AGMs, to expand the number of Board members up to the maximum set out in the bylaws. This will allow the organization to take advantage of new volunteers interested in serving on the Board, to help fulfill the tasks of running the organization. Any increase in the number of Board members will have to be approved by the next AGM.

Changes to the bylaws to keep two named officer positions (President and Treasurer). All other members would be members-at-large and duties could be assigned as needed. This change will give board members flexibility to undertake projects and tasks, allowing for illnesses and so on.

New Board members were submitted for the approval of the membership.

New Board members elected or ratified at the AGM are:
- Dirk Blokland
- Gerald McLennan
- Deborah McNevin
- Anne Purves
- Kathie Leier.

They join the following Board members in serving the organization:
- Gwen Wigley, Chair
- Chris Wigley, Treasurer
- Carolyn Hains
- Maria Savelle
- Jackie Whitaker (Past President).

As members, your participation keeps the COPD Canada Patient Network as a vibrant and helpful organization into the future. Thank you!

New Board members elected or ratified at the AGM are:

For those of you who have not noticed on the website as yet, our Head Office Address and contacts has changed. My husband Chris and I have taken on that responsibility for now. New Address:

Head Office
P.O. Box 1555
Lake Cowichan, BC  V0R 2G0
Phone: 1-250-483-6507
Email: gwen@copdcanada.ca  chris@copdcanada.ca

One of the other things we discovered (in sending out the Action Plans) is that our mailing list is significantly out of date. Our apologies for any shortcomings in the mailings and we will be working to make sure the list is kept current, to the extent that we can. It will make this job much easier if our members could let us know of address or any other changes.

The following are extracts from the Chair’s Report for the year 2012, by Gwen Wigley:

Chair’s Report: 2012

It has been a year of significant changes with more to come. The COPD Canada Patient Network is a vibrant organization. As members, your support is critical to the Network and your input is valued tremendously.
Although they are run separately, the Forums are linked to copdcanada.ca website—see http://philins.proboards.com/index.cgi. The question of “why do you visit the Forums” was posed by Administrator Jackie recently, as work is underway to test a beta version of the program. Below are some extracts of the responses from some of the people who responded. (Note: fb stands for Facebook.)

I come here because we are all in the same boat. I will also look up other info on copd that was put on before I got it. I personally think it is a very helpful site; lots of times I will sometimes think this family is closer than my fb friends & family. Also I think we really listen to one another.

I come in every day to see what's up. I really feel for some of the posters. I was diagnosed 2 years ago and immediately put on oxygen as needed. When I read about all the troubles some are having, I think I'm pretty lucky. But who knows what the future will bring. I think the forums are great just the way they are and you moderators are doing a great job.

The answer to that question is that here people understand when you are up and when you are down. None of my friends on FB inquire about my COPD or really care because they can't relate to how I manage. Even my real family doesn't get it. It's hard when you can't go and do with others. My world has become much smaller due to problems associated with this disease. I'm home here, and feel accepted, SOB and all! ...You don't find that caring online anywhere else. Thanks for being here!

Here I can share with people who understand COPD. I would not be able to have the fellowship and support on FB that I find here on COPD in Canada. I believe it to be as much a part of my life today as breathing is. This is Family.

The information shared here is invaluable. The information people share here, I do not think we would find anywhere else. The personal experiences provide information and details that we are not able to get from the medical community. I think this forum is very valuable and relevant. While I use Facebook and Linkedin a little, I do not think they are suitable to replace this source.
Almost every day I click on my COPD Canada bookmark and then the 50 latest posts link to see what's up with you all here. If there is an individual topic I am interested in I'll click on that too, to read more or maybe even contribute an actual post from time to time.

I probably don't sign in and post much because I don't feel I have anything important to say these days, which is kind of funny since part of the reason I do visit is because I enjoy reading about the everyday activities, trials & tribulations of the rest of the people here very much. It makes me feel less alone with this isolating disease and part of the community here, albeit a mostly silent member...

I check 4 sites every day. Each one has something to offer and I get a 'pearl' or two from each. I particularly like this forum because posters seem to give more detail about their issues and others chime in with suggestions or to validate posters concerns, explanations,... the support is gentle & warm especially when someone is going through a rough time, and the updates for news and RT Q&A is so helpful (especially the archives!) as my disease progresses. I also like reading about how people handle their difficulties especially when Hospital/medical centers are not so local.....makes for creativity.

There's no place like home!......This is my home, cyber home, that is. And yet it's even more. Yeah, I have a FB page but it doesn't do for me what I see it does for some others. FB is too open to the world and to people who haven't a clue as to what I am going through. Here at the Forum we share our troubles and our triumphs and back each other up. I come here every day without fail and post just as often. I don't have much contact with the outside world, this is it right here...
Laughter, the Best Medicine

If stress burned calories, I'd be a Supermodel!

To Do List
First Day of Spring

1. Shovel walk
2. Scrape windshield
3. Break icicles off gutters
4. Shovel snow off roof
5. Salt sidewalk
6. Defrost water pipes
7. Reschedule cancelled Airline reservations
8. Chip ice off car door
9. Tow frozen car to garage to defrost radiator
10. Put groundhog in oven w/BBQ sauce

It's behind me...

Isn't it..?

No groundhogs were harmed in the composition of this page. Thanks to all the Forum members who post funnies every Friday!
News & Views

Recent Activities

New Action Plans

A new action plan has been produced by the Canadian Thoracic Society (part of the Lung Association of Canada). Thanks to the hard work of Jackie Whittaker and Maria Savelle in liaising with the Society to get the new action plan produced.

What is an Action Plan?

An Action Plan provides a guide on what to do when your COPD moves from “normal” to an exacerbation. In other words, it gives some guidance on what to do in terms of medications and other activities:

⇒ When you feel well
⇒ When you feel worse
⇒ When you feel much worse.

The Action Plan is intended to be filled out in conjunction with your doctor or respirologist. Copies are provided for your file, the pharmacist, respiratory educator (in case you have one), and for yourself.

How do I get a copy?

A hard copy of the new Action Plan was mailed to COPD members in Canada. It has also been posted on the COPD Canada website: [http://copdcanada.ca/COPD%20Action%20Plan.htm](http://copdcanada.ca/COPD%20Action%20Plan.htm).


The Action Plan is a handy tool and can be of much help to you, your medical providers, and even your family. Thanks are due to the generosity of the Canadian Thoracic Society in providing us copies.

Healthy Eating-

Easy BBQ Chickpea casserole

(Contributed by Mary 57)

4 C. cooked or canned chickpeas (2-19oz cans, drained and rinsed)
2 C canned stewed tomatoes (1 19oz can, not drained)
3 to 4 tbsp maple syrup or honey
1 med. onion, chopped
1 green pepper, chopped
1 tsp Dijon mustard
1/2 tsp cayenne pepper
pepper to taste

Spray a 2 quart casserole with non-stick cooking spray. Combine all ingredients and mix well. Cover and bake at 350F for 1 hour.

Freezes well, can be served hot or cold. This is a great pot luck dish.
Hi! I am playing guest editor with Gwen’s guidance. I hope you enjoy the newsletter. Many thanks to those who contribute directly and through their posts on the Forum.

If it’s been a while since you’ve visited the Forum, I would encourage you to have another look. Thanks to Jackie and John who serve as Administrators, and others who serve as moderators or librarians. They work hard to keep this site going and to keep it relevant and useful and helpful, while the members of the Forum contribute their heart, knowledge and hope.

If you have any suggestions for future newsletter topics, please get in touch with Gwen at gwen@copdcanada.ca. If you have any complaints or suggestions about this edition, please let me know at dmcnevin@copdcanada.ca. Thank you!

Deborah

(Below is a picture of Lake Laberge, Yukon. I shot this one spring morning before heading out for a fishing trip. Robert Service would be impressed—as would Sam McGee. The fish, on the other hand, turned out to be quite safe.)
COPD Canada Patient Network Membership Form

Please fill in and mail, or go to the web address below for the on-line form.

COPD Canada Patient Network
Attn: Dave Raymer
3047 Old Sambro Rd
Williamswood, NS B3V 1E6 Canada

The “On-Line” Membership Form can be found at http://www.copdcanada.ca/sign_up.htm

Contact Info:  E Mail Contact@copdcanada.ca or Membership@copdcanada.ca
Our Main WebSite is www.copdcanada.ca

There's no Dues or Fees. Membership is FREE.

www.copdcanada.ca

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Are You a (Please Circle One)
Patient, Caregiver, Family Member/Friend,
Medical/Professional, Other (if other please specify)

How did you Hear about COPD Canada Patient Network? (Please circle)
Internet Search, Family/Friend, Pamphlet,
Newsletter, Referral
Other (If other or by referral, please specify)

Do You have any Comments or Suggestions?

As a member of the Network it is understood and agreed that if we undertake a mail campaign to legislators or other governing bodies of importance as it relates to COPD, that you will participate in this when the request to members goes out. Usually the Maximum is twice a year. (The above is applicable to Canadian members)

Please Note: All information gathered/received will be held in the strictest of confidence and WILL NOT be shared with anyone at any time (with the exception of your name only in the event a supplier wants to verify your membership) Your personal information will NEVER be compromised.

Once we receive your form, a welcoming note will be sent to you with additional information along with your Membership Number, the most recent Monthly “AIRmail” and Newsletter.

"Together" We CAN !!! Care, Advocate, Network