

## **EBOP Asthma/COPD Support Group** **Newsletter April 2011**

This month's topic is "**COPD and Exercises**".

If you have trouble breathing, exercise may be the last thing you feel like doing. But exercises for COPD can help your breathing, allowing you to stay as active as possible and improving your quality of life. Exercise can:

- Improve how well your body uses oxygen, which is important since people with COPD use more energy to breathe than other people do.
- Decrease your symptoms and improve your breathing.
- Strengthen your heart, lower your blood pressure, and improve your circulation.
- Improve your energy, making it possible to stay more active.
- Improve your sleep and make you feel more relaxed.
- Help you maintain a healthy weight.
- Enhance your mental and emotional outlook.
- Reduce your social isolation, if you exercise with others.
- Strengthen your bones.

Stretching exercises lengthen your muscles, increasing your flexibility.

Aerobic and Strengthening exercises work your muscles, heart and lungs, improving their endurance and help your body to use oxygen more efficiently.

Breathing exercises help to re-establish a healthy breathing pattern which is often lost due to chronic breathlessness. It enables the lungs to work more efficiently and provide the body with more oxygen. Breathing exercises also promote calm during episodes of breathing distress which helps people with COPD react more effectively.

**Support group meetings:** Theme "COPD and Exercises" with a variety of guest speakers:

**Kawerau: Monday, 18<sup>th</sup> April at 10.00am, Senior Citizen Hall, Porritt Drive**  
Guest speaker: Jax Rueben, Judy Dalgety

**Opotiki: Tuesday, 19<sup>th</sup> April at 10.00am, 17 Kelly Street**  
Guest speaker: Jeremy Luxton, physiotherapist, Guy Monica, Tai-Chi instructor

**Whakatane: Wednesday, 20<sup>th</sup> April at 1.00pm, Disabilities Resource Centre Trust, 141 King Street, Kopeopeo**  
Guest speaker: Kathy Dempster-Rivett, 'Sit and be Fit' instructor

We are looking forward to seeing you at our next meeting.

***Gisela Sonntag***  
**COPD Field Officer**  
**(Phone 07 307 1447 or 0800 227 363)**

## **Sex and COPD** (Source: <http://copd.about.com/od/livingwithcopd/a/sexandcopd.htm>)

### **Does NOT Mean the End to your Sex Life**

By Deborah Leader, RN, About.com Guide, updated November 10, 2010

COPD is a debilitating illness that can dramatically affect many areas of your life, including your sexuality. For many couples, sex and COPD do not go hand in hand, primarily because of the fear of shortness of breath during times of sexual intimacy. This fear can become so great, that people with COPD may begin to avoid sexual intimacy altogether. Moreover, if they do encounter intimacy, they may be unable to maintain sexual arousal or to reach climax. The non-COPD partner may also experience hesitation towards sexual activity, thinking it to be in the best interest of the COPD partner. While nothing could be further from the truth, fear and anxiety surrounding these types of sexual issues can often lead to feelings of frustration, loneliness and isolation for both parties. The good news is, that avoiding sexual intimacy is not the answer and being diagnosed with COPD does not mean the end of your sex life! With a patient partner and some sound advice regarding COPD and sexuality, you can enjoy sexual intimacy with your partner

### **Tips for Enhancing Sexual Intimacy**

- First and foremost, talk with your partner honestly regarding your feelings about having sex. This will keep the lines of communication open and allow your partner to express their feelings in return.
- To avoid bronchospasm during intercourse, use a bronchodilator immediately prior to and during sexual relations, if necessary.
- Avoid sexual activity immediately following a heavy meal. This may increase your fatigability. If you use supplemental oxygen, plan on using the same amount during sexual activity. Use extended tubing so there is enough to allow you to place the oxygen tank away from the bed or completely out of the room.
- Make sure the room is at a comfortable temperature prior to engaging in sex. Use a fan during intercourse to keep from overheating.
- Avoid alcohol prior to having sex as it can interfere with sexual abilities.
- Clear your bronchial secretions prior to engaging in sexual activity. This may lessen the severity of breathlessness during sex. If you are having difficulty clearing your airway, try the controlled coughing technique.
- Choose easy sex positions that require the least amount of energy. For example, laying side to side during intercourse is much more comfortable and uses far less energy than the top-bottom position.
- Plan to have the able bodied partner assume more of an active role during sex so that the COPD partner will be less fatigued.
- Because sexual activity takes energy, plan to engage in sex when you are feeling most rested. If necessary, take short breaks during sex, while you continue to be intimate.
- Focus on hugging, kissing and touching, rather than on the sexual act itself. Incorporate sexual aids if need be, to achieve a more satisfying experience (only if both partners agree).

### **More Information About Sex and COPD**

Now that you know how to enhance sexual intimacy in the bedroom, there are some aspects of sex and COPD that may be of further interest to you: [Beginning an exercise program will help you build your activity tolerance which in turn, will make sexual activity easier and reduce your shortness of breath, both in and out of the bedroom.](#) While COPD may decrease the frequency and duration of sexual activity, it does not diminish sexual ability. Many medications have side effects that may affect your sex drive. Be sure to ask your doctor or pharmacist about this. You can also visit About.com's Drugs A-Z, for a complete list of medications and their side effects. Remember that some changes in sexuality are a normal part of the aging process and have nothing to do with COPD, such as slower arousal time or delayed orgasm.

Expressing the love that you have for your partner through sexuality is a wonderful part of human nature. Having COPD or any other chronic illness should not change that.