

A Breath of Fresh Air

A newsletter for Reliant Medical Group COPD patients and their families

Vol. XII, No. 2

Edited by Margalit Lai, RN, MS, Lead COPD Program Care Manager

Spring 2015

“No winter lasts forever; no spring skips its turn.”

– Hal Borland

Happy Spring!

I was fortunate this winter when the snow kept piling up and it seemed like the cold weather would never end to be able to get away and land 11 hours later in Israel. The difference was remarkable, everywhere the sun was shining and flowers were in bloom. Here are some pictures I took in the desert to share with you. In the meantime, of course, spring also arrived here and now all of us can enjoy the sun, the warm temperatures and the beautiful colors. All that should add up to good spirits and outdoor activities for you. I hope you will take advantage of the great weather before it turns on us again.

Spring is also a time for new beginnings so here at our COPD Program we have a new care manager, **Pamela Howell RN, BSN**, who has started to take care of all of you who previously had Chris Andersson as your nurse. Pam will introduce herself later in this newsletter.



On expiration dates...

Many of you keep Prednisone and an antibiotic on hand in case you need it. Luckily, many of you don't end up needing it for a year and throw it away per the expiration date on the bottle. By law, a pharmacist has to write an expiration date on the bottle of one year from the time he or she dispenses it. The reason that this is done is to assure that the medicine is kept under ideal conditions so it does not lose its effectiveness. For the medications you use regularly this is not important since you usually use them within one to three months anyway. However, sometimes you are doing well and do not need Prednisone and/or the antibiotic for more than a year and then you end up throwing it away. This is also true for the rescue inhalers that some of you use very infrequently. My suggestion to you is to ask the pharmacist when you pick up Prednisone or an antibiotic for the expiration date that is displayed on the original bottle that they received from the manufacturer. You should then write it down on the bottle so you know what the real expiration date is.

Motivation makes all the difference

Someone in the program mentioned to Pamela that while walking in the mall she sees a lot of people who are much older than her walking much faster than she does and that this motivates her to do better. There's no doubt competition is always a good motivator. So see if you can find someone to challenge you the next time you exercise.

I also got another great idea from **BH** who quit smoking a few days ago but continues to have a very difficult time despite being determined not to resume her smoking. BH was wondering if we had a sponsor program for quitters that would allow them to call a successful quitter for encouragement and support. I wonder if there is anyone among you who would like to be available for struggling quitters? If so, please call me at (508) 368-3936.



Allergy time again

This is allergy season for a lot of you. I hope you know the drill by now, but just in case you don't, here is a reminder:

- ✦ Check your local TV or radio station, your local newspaper, or the Internet for pollen forecasts and current pollen levels.
- ✦ If high pollen counts are forecasted, start taking allergy medications before your symptoms start.
- ✦ Close doors and windows at night or any other time when pollen counts are high.
- ✦ Avoid outdoor activity in the early morning when pollen counts are highest.

Healthy Eating Habits and COPD

By Pamela Howell, RN, BSN

My interest in disease prevention through healthy nutrition and lifestyle was the catalyst that has led me to the Reliant COPD Disease Management Program. The path began with my work as a registered nurse in endocrinology as a nationally Certified Diabetes Educator (CDE). As a CDE, I helped people learn how to self-manage their chronic disease and prevent or slow its progression and related complications. Shortly after becoming a CDE, I developed and trademarked a successful program for weight loss, diabetes, cardiac disease, hypertension, hyperlipidemia and celiac disease. Nutrition, exercise and lifestyle choices are major factors that impact disease. Many diseases can be prevented or reversed through healthful changes. Additionally, symptoms of chronic diseases, such as COPD, may be decreased and exacerbations reduced through healthful nutrition and lifestyle.

COPD is a serious, chronic disease that is most commonly caused by exposure to irritants, such as cigarette smoking, second hand smoke or air pollutants. Smoking leads to inflammation and increased mucous production which affects lung function, making breathing more difficult. There are also a number of foods that cause inflammation in the airway and other areas of the body. Inflammation in the airway and lungs can leave the affected person gasping for air and at an increased risk for a COPD exacerbation and pneumonia.

Sugar and sugar substitutes increase inflammation in the body, which can make breathing more difficult for the person with COPD. Sugar also suppresses the immune system and weakens the body's ability to fight off infection. A study by researchers at Loma Linda University looked at how sugar affects the body's ability to fight off bacteria that cause infection. The researchers gave volunteers in the study 100 grams of sugar, the amount you would find in one 20 ounce can of soda. The researchers then drew blood samples from the volunteers and mixed some bacteria in the samples. They discovered that the sugar disabled many of the white blood cells, whose job it

is to destroy bacteria, and they were not able to devour as many bacteria. This increases the risk of infection in the body.



Sugar and artificial sweeteners have many different names. Read labels to find the obvious and hidden sugars such as: high fructose corn syrup, corn syrup, sucrose, glucose, maltose, dextrose, brown sugar, maltodextrin, rice syrup, sucralose, and Aspartame (NutraSweet or Equal). In addition, certain high carbohydrate foods such as white flour, prepared potatoes, white rice, pasta, as well as cookies, pastries and juices can raise blood sugar and cause inflammation.

The good news is there are foods that will boost your immune system and fight off bacteria that are trying to make you sick. Here are some suggestions:

- Plant foods, such as fruits and vegetables, help reduce inflammation. These foods are antioxidants and support your immune system.
- For daily meals and snacks, try to include dark, leafy green vegetables and brightly colored vegetables and fruits, as well as sweet potatoes and legumes/beans.
- Studies show that eating fresh fruits and vegetables is associated with improved lung function and reduced symptoms and exacerbations.
- The best way to eat vegetables is raw, steamed or baked.
- Avoid canned fruit, as the sugar content is typically higher.
- If you purchase canned vegetables, choose low sodium varieties, or rinse canned vegetables several times to remove sodium.

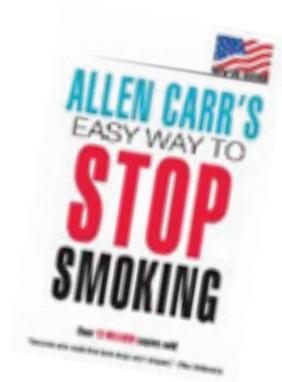
Try to enjoy five or more servings per day of fresh or frozen fruit and vegetables. Be sure to include your favorites and try some new ones – your body will thank you for it!



Patient Contributions

➔ **Leo Cusson** found a pulse oximeter at Ardees for \$25. Pulse oximeters are, unfortunately, not covered by insurance. We recommend them especially for people who are not on oxygen continuously to make sure their oxygen level is at least above 92% on room air. If not, the oxygen should be used.

➔ **Bonnie Edwards** shared with us her unique method for quitting smoking. Bonnie read the book *Allen Carr's Easy Way to Stop Smoking* and says she quit cold turkey when she got about a quarter of the way through the book. She found it extremely powerful and persuasive. I hope that those of you who are still struggling and having a hard time quitting, will give this book a try. You can purchase it on Amazon for \$13.10 – the equivalent of about a pack and a half of cigarettes. 😊 You can also watch Allen Carr's videos online, for free.



Your body knows what to do. It's your mind that gets in the way.

– Phyllis Sues



Here's how to reach us

By phone:

Margalit Lai: (508) 368-3936

Pamela Howell: (508) 368-3935

Our email address:

margalit.lai@reliantmedicalgroup.org

pamela.howell@reliantmedicalgroup.org

Our "old fashioned" address:

WMC Suite 390, 123 Summer Street, Worcester, MA 01608

Online you can check us out at:

www.reliantmedicalgroup.org/copd

