What is COPD?

COPD, or Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, is a group of conditions that cause breathing problems as a result of airway blockages. The diagnoses of emphysema and chronic bronchitis are examples of COPD. Almost 16 million people in the US have been diagnosed with COPD and many others may have COPD but have not been officially diagnosed. Although COPD cannot be cured, it can be treated with the help of your healthcare provider.

What causes COPD?

Inhalation of tobacco smoke is the most common cause of COPD in the United States and is a major factor in the progression of the disease. Other factors that may contribute to the development of COPD are exposure to air pollution, certain respiratory infections, or genetic factors. Continued on Page 3
Protect Against the Flu

The flu virus remains one of the Top 10 leading causes of death each year in the US, and this is especially concerning during the current COVID-19 pandemic. Now more than ever, it is important that you protect yourself, your loved ones, and your community against the flu by following these recommended safety precautions:

- Get the flu vaccine
- Avoid close contact with those who are sick and stay home if you are
- Wear a mask when in public
- Use your elbow to cover cough and sneezes
- Wash hands thoroughly for 20-seconds and carry hand sanitizer with you to use frequently
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth
- Disinfect surfaces
- Ensure you are maintaining a physical distance of 6ft in public spaces

What you need to know:
The symptoms of COVID-19 and the flu are very similar. For this reason, it is important to get the flu vaccination. Up to 20% of people who have COVID also have the flu and other respiratory illnesses. By vaccinating against the flu, you are protecting yourself from getting both the flu and COVID-19 virus at the same time. If you do get the flu, the vaccination should lessen the severity of your symptoms.

Symptoms to watch out for:

- Chills
- Cough/Congestion (allergy-like symptoms)
- Fatigue
- Fever
- Headache
- Muscle and Body Aches
- Nausea
- Shortness of Breath
- Sore Throat

The CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting against flu. While the flu shot is really important for high-risk populations such as infants, the elderly, and those with underlying or chronic health conditions, everyone can benefit from an annual flu vaccination.

Be sure to talk with your physician or clinical provider to understand how the flu shot can protect you and others this flu season.
What is COPD? cont.

What are the symptoms of COPD?
- Shortness of breath
- Difficulty taking a deep breath
- Frequent coughing or wheezing
- Excess mucus, sputum or phlegm production

How is COPD diagnosed?
COPD can be diagnosed with a simple breathing test called spirometry which measures the function of your lungs.

How is COPD treated?
- Quit smoking
- Avoid tobacco smoke or other air pollution
- Take medication such as inhalers or nebulizers
- Supplemental oxygen
- Pulmonary rehabilitation
- Avoid lung infections and discuss influenza and pneumonia vaccinations with your healthcare provider

A diagnosis of COPD can impose limitations on your quality of life. People who have COPD suffer from restrictions on their physical activity, may be more susceptible to lung infections, may need to carry oxygen with them everywhere they go, and are at risk for more hospital visits or stays. If you have concerns about COPD, discuss them with your healthcare provider. Again, although COPD cannot be cured, it can be treated to preserve as much quality of life as possible.

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