

# BREATHING *matters*

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## PARTNER WITH YOUR PRIMARY CARE PROVIDER TO **Manage Your COPD**

With Joseph C. Hou, MD, FCCP

**Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease or COPD is the third leading cause of death in the United States; in New Hampshire, more than 85,000 people have been diagnosed with it.**

COPD encompasses chronic bronchitis, emphysema, and a type of asthma, but an accurate diagnosis is vital, since asthma and heart disease have similar symptoms.

A diagnosis of COPD is made through medical history, a physical exam, and imaging studies such as chest CT scans. A spirometric assessment at your doctor's office or a pulmonary function test that shows airway obstruction or narrowing is essential to an accurate diagnosis.

If you have COPD, there are things you can do to improve your life. Be proactive and partner with your primary care provider (PCP). Try these five tips for managing COPD.

### **1. EXERCISE, CONDITIONING AND DIET**

I tell all of my patients, even prior to starting medication, to focus on improving conditioning and strength through exercise, weight-bearing activities, and nutrition.

It's common for people with lung disease to limit physical activity due to shortness of breath. Over time, they become weaker and symptoms worsen. Thirty minutes of exercise a day, 4 to 5 times per week can increase endurance and fitness.

A balanced diet is important since COPD can increase calorie needs and may lead to a loss of muscle mass and tone.

I strongly recommend enrolling in a pulmonary rehabilitation program. Pulmonary rehab is a multidisciplinary, individualized treatment

intervention designed to reduce symptoms of breathlessness, anxiety and depression.

Programs include exercise training, nutritional counseling, education and instruction in medication usage and breathing techniques, along with social support. A recent study showed that a yoga regimen is also beneficial. (Breathe NH just held its first chair yoga class. See our website and Facebook page for updates.)

Not all PCPs are aware of pulmonary rehab's tremendous benefits, so ask your provider if it hasn't been mentioned.

### **2. NO IFS, ANDS OR BUTTS**

Cigarette smoking is the most important risk factor for COPD and a major cause of poor lung function. Continued smoking leads to chronic airway inflammation and mucus production.

Talk with your PCP about quitting options: medications, nicotine replacement therapy, counseling or group program, or a combination. See [QuitNowNH.org](http://QuitNowNH.org) or call 800-QUITNOW.

### **3. AVOID INFECTIONS**

Individuals with COPD are at higher risk for lung infections. Good hand washing and limiting exposure to germs is the best prevention. Discuss vaccinations with your PCP, including an influenza vaccination every fall, and pneumonia vaccines.

### **4. TAKE YOUR MEDICINE AND BREATHE EASIER**

Inhaler medications for COPD can decrease symptoms and improve exercise capacity by "opening up" airways and reducing inflammation.

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# COPD 'Town Hall' 2016: Critical First Step

BETHESDA, MD—The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) hosted the first-ever COPD Town Hall meeting at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) on February 29 – March 1, 2016. This was a critical first step in addressing COPD on a national level.

Breathe New Hampshire's Director of Programs, Allyssa Thompson, and board member Esther (Essy) Moverman, RRT, RCP, a pulmonary specialist and COPD/Asthma educator at Monadnock Community Hospital, joined more than 200 people representing the COPD community.

Participants included individuals living with COPD and their families, healthcare providers, pharmacists, researchers, advocacy groups, industry representatives and government officials, all tasked with developing a National Action Plan.

There is no standard plan in the U.S.; New Hampshire is one of the few to have a state plan. The national plan will provide a framework to increase awareness and reduce the burden of COPD nationwide.

During the two-day meeting, participants split into six working groups to develop objectives, strategies and benchmarks for a specific goal. Their recommendations will inform the national plan. The six goals include to:

1. **Empower patients**, their families, and communities to recognize and reduce the burden of COPD
2. **Increase and sustain COPD prevention**, detection, diagnosis, treatment, and management
3. **Increase collaboration and coordination** to sustain surveillance and evaluation to improve collection, analysis, dissemination, and reporting of COPD-related public health data
4. **Increase and sustain research** to better understand prevention, pathogenesis, diagnosis, treatment, and management of COPD
5. **Increase awareness and sustain COPD education** among stakeholders, decision makers, individuals with COPD, their families, caregivers, communities, and populations at risk
6. **Integrate recommended policy**, educational, and program changes into the legislative, research, public health, and care delivery structures of the nation

As Breathe New Hampshire and its volunteers continue implementation of our NH COPD Plan, we're excited to be involved in the National Action Plan.

Because of our experience, Allyssa Thompson and Essy Moverman volunteered to help shape the national plan to reduce the burden for those living with COPD.

For more information on COPD and the NH COPD Plan: email [COPD@breathenh.org](mailto:COPD@breathenh.org) or see [BreatheNH.org/COPD](http://BreatheNH.org/COPD).

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Medications are delivered by different kinds of inhalers and nebulizers. Finding the right medicines for you and using them properly is critical.

Bring your medications to each doctor's visit to be sure you're using them correctly. Up to 94% of patients with asthma or COPD use their inhaler incorrectly.

Because COPD patients may require more oxygen than is available in the air, oxygen therapy is an important component of COPD management and the only intervention that can improve mortality. Oxygen therapy may improve quality of life, cardiovascular risk, depression, cognitive function and ability to exercise.

## 5. GET AN ACTION PLAN

Work with your PCP to fill in your COPD Action Plan to help you recognize when symptoms are worsening and what to do. Breathe NH's COPD Plan team is creating a one-sheet Action Plan. (See below.)

This can help you treat your flare-up proactively and limit emergency room visits or hospitalization. Know when to call your provider and when to go to the Emergency Department.



*Dr. Joseph C. Hou practices pulmonary and critical care medicine at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Manchester. He is board certified in internal medicine, pulmonary medicine, and critical care medicine, and is part of Breathe NH's COPD Plan Committee. For more information on COPD, visit [breathenh.org/copd](http://breathenh.org/copd). Providers can request a COPD "toolkit" which includes*

*ACP guidelines, an Action Plan, and resources for patients and providers by emailing [COPD@breathenh.org](mailto:COPD@breathenh.org).*

## FDA Can Regulate E-Cigs

WASHINGTON, DC—The Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act of 2009 granted the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authority to regulate certain tobacco products. Now, almost seven years after the Tobacco Control Act became law, the FDA has "deemed" that all other tobacco products can be regulated by them also.

Per regulations published May 10, 2016, all tobacco-related products—cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, cigars, e-cigarettes (e-cigs), dissolvable tobacco products and nicotine derived from tobacco (such as "e-juice")—can be sold only to those 18 and older. Age verification is required. Lawsuits have been filed challenging the regulations.

Public health policy options to protect states or communities from tobacco-related hazards include prohibiting tobacco use in public spaces, raising taxes on products such as e-cigs, and raising the minimum legal sales age to 21, as the state of California has recently done.

## Welcome Our COPD Program Manager!



Jane Goodman joined Breathe NH at the end of March as the new COPD Program Manager, to work on the implementation of the statewide COPD Plan through increased engagement and outreach. She'll also provide technical and administrative support to volunteer work groups.

Before joining Breathe New Hampshire, Jane worked for the NH Oral Health Coalition as a project coordinator to increase access to oral health for underserved communities. Other nonprofit experience includes New Hampshire Healthy Kids and consulting work at NH DHHS.

Jane received her Bachelor in Business Administration degree from the University of Michigan and a Master's in Public Health from the Harvard School of Public Health.

The COPD Program Manager position is funded through 2016, thanks to gifts from these New Hampshire Charitable Foundation funds: Dorothy P. Kendall Fund, Helene D. Grimes Fund, and the Stetteneim Family Community Fund.



## Your Ticket to the Best Values in New England!

**GIVE THE GIFT OF FAMILY TIME AT NEW ENGLAND'S FAVORITE ATTRACTIONS WITH THE 2016 BREATHE NH FUN PASS.**

**For only \$32, you get coupons to more than 100 family attractions worth over \$1,800!**

Enjoy Story Land, York's Wild Kingdom, Edaville USA, Old Sturbridge Village, zip lines, adventure and amusement parks, water parks, whale watches, museums, river and lake cruises, and many more.

Many coupons admit a child 12 and under free or at a discounted rate with a paying adult, so with one visit to some attractions, you cover the cost. Offers and deals vary by attraction. See how much money you can save by going to [BreatheNH.org/FunPass\\_2016-attractions-discounts](http://BreatheNH.org/FunPass_2016-attractions-discounts).

Use the Fun Pass as a road map to explore new places and create family memories for a lifetime. Go online or call 603-669-2411 to order.

Proceeds support our critical mission of eliminating lung disease and improving the quality of life for those with lung disease.

## BREATHE BETTER CHAMPIONS

### Dynamic Duo Start COPD Support Group

Coping with a long-term illness like chronic obstructive pulmonary disease is stressful. Symptoms such as difficulty sleeping, loss of appetite, inability to be as active as you'd like, and shortness of breath can lead to anxiety and depression.

That's why two Breathe NH volunteers from Londonderry with professional expertise—and COPD—created a support group.

**Diane Blake** (left) has a master's degree in counseling psychology, and **Phyllis Franz** (right) is a retired psychotherapist.



Both discovered Breathe NH at pulmonary rehab, and decided to join forces to fight the emotional, psychological and stigmatizing effects of COPD.

It's a match made in heaven—or at least, in Breathe NH's conference room once a month in Manchester. Since the support group was announced, more than a dozen have attended.

“One of the best things in support groups,” Diane said, “is sharing resources with others in your world. Family and friends find what you're dealing with very hard to understand.”

Phyllis, retired and missing work, friends and colleagues, said, “Volunteering has made me feel useful again. My heart was set on starting a support group, and Breathe NH made me feel at home.”

Neither of these volunteers lets everyday challenges stand in their way of making a difference for people living with COPD. For this reason, and for their initiative in reaching out to support others, Phyllis Franz and Diane Blake are Breathe Better Champions.

“The goal is to be able to offer support groups in other parts of the state too,” Director of Programs Allyssa Thompson said. Call 603-669-2411 or email [COPD@breathenh.org](mailto:COPD@breathenh.org) to learn more.

## Summertime and the Breathing Is . . .

**If you notice more Air Quality Action Days this summer, it's not because there is more air pollution in New Hampshire; it's because the ozone standard has been strengthened. Ozone is the summertime air pollutant also known as smog.**

On October 1, 2015, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) strengthened the National Ambient Air Quality Standard for ground-level ozone from 75 to 70 parts per billion. If NH Department of Environmental Services issues an Air Quality Action Day this summer, it means that you're being notified earlier, at a lower pollution level, so you can take precaution's sooner. In general, the ozone trend in New Hampshire has been going down, due to stricter controls on industry, electrical utilities and vehicles.

Courtesy NHDES, from *Environmental News* May-June 2016.

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## Donate That Eyesore

That driveway clunker can help Breathe NH and might add up to a tax deduction for you! Haven't used that snowmobile since the Ice Age? We'll pick it up for free—even if it doesn't run. See [BreatheNH.org/vehicle-donation](http://BreatheNH.org/vehicle-donation) or call 888-458-6458.

## Save These Dates

- Thursday, Sept. 8** Eager Breather's Fresh Air Day Cruise
- Monday, Sept. 26** Golf Classic at Lake Winnepesaukee Golf Club
- Thursday, Nov. 3** Night of Thanks & Centennial Celebration

## A PROFILE IN GIFT PLANNING

### It Takes More than Good Works



**Albee Budnitz**  
MD, FACP, FCCP

*The Dr. Robert B. Kerr Legacy Society is made up of members who have provided for Breathe NH in their estate plans, to help us continue our critical mission of eliminating lung disease. This society is named after our founder, Dr. Robert B. Kerr, who dedicated 50 years of his life to the organization.*

Dr. Albee Budnitz practices internal and pulmonary medicine at Downtown Medical Associates/Foundation Medical Partners in Nashua, and is a longtime Breathe New Hampshire volunteer and board member.

Now his support of lung health will continue after he's gone through Dr. Budnitz's gift to Breathe NH as a member of the Dr. Robert B. Kerr Legacy Society.

"In the last several years, I've decided to consolidate my giving to those organizations which not only do good work in our local (i.e., New Hampshire) community, but that have also shown civility, sustainability and, most of all, integrity," Dr. Budnitz said.

"Breathe New Hampshire fits the bill on all counts; and works on issues—COPD, tobacco, asthma and clean air—that are near and dear to my almost 40-year professional career here in New Hampshire."

*Methods of gift planning which may offer tax benefits include giving via your will, life insurance policy, IRA or appreciated stock. Learn more by contacting Kelly Sicard at [ksicard@breathenh.org](mailto:ksicard@breathenh.org) or 603-669-2411, or visit [BreatheNH.org/giftplanning](http://BreatheNH.org/giftplanning). As always, please remember to consult your attorney or financial advisor when making any changes to your plans.*

## Facts about asthma in New Hampshire

**MAY WAS NATIONAL ASTHMA & ALLERGY AWARENESS MONTH.**

**1 in 9 children & adults HAVE ASTHMA**

**34% of children and 49% of adults REPORT HAVING "POORLY CONTROLLED" OR "NOT WELL CONTROLLED" ASTHMA**

**\$167 million annually DIRECT MEDICAL COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH ASTHMA**

*NH Asthma Control Program*