

Achieve

A Newsletter
for AvMed
Members

▶ YOUR HEALTHIEST LIFE WITH COPD

Tame Stress to Manage COPD

If you or a loved one has COPD, you know that inhaling smoke or even pollen can make it tougher to breathe. But here's something you may not realize: One of the biggest triggers for a COPD flare-up is anxiety.

It's all linked to shortness of breath, according to the American Lung Association. When your breathing becomes shallow, your brain perceives a stressful situation, even when there isn't one. That causes an anxious response in your body.

But there are steps you can take to manage your anxiety, boost your mental health, and keep your COPD in check. Try these simple tips:

Mindful breathing. With COPD, stress can cause rapid, panicked breathing, or even a full flare-up. When you feel your anxiety start to rise, try pursed-lip breathing: Take a breath in through the nose for two seconds,

then pucker your lips like you're blowing out a candle and blow for four seconds. Repeat this for several minutes until you feel able to take fuller, deeper breaths.

Follow your plan. Taking control of COPD can reduce your stress. Stay on your treatment plan. And be sure to let your doctor know if your symptoms interfere with eating, sleeping, or exercising. *(Continued)*



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Break the cycle. Taking care of your emotions is as important as caring for your body. Talk to your doctor if you're feeling stressed or anxious. Therapy, medication, or a support group can help.

Just say no. Just as you avoid a smoky room, avoid people, places, and situations that cause you stress. Turn your focus to people who are genuinely supportive instead.

Stay active. Take a short stroll around the block or walk along a route that has benches for resting. Try chair yoga or mindfulness training. As much as you can, continue activities you enjoy — hobbies can take your mind off your condition and give you a sense of accomplishment.



Harmonicas for Health

Who knew that learning to play the harmonica is also a great way to improve your breathing?

Thanks to a program called Harmonicas for Health, you can make music while practicing a COPD basic: pursed-lip breathing. "It's the best tool in the toolbox," explains Stephanie Williams, R.D., senior director of community education programs at the COPD Foundation. "And it's something you do naturally when you play the harmonica."

A study from Baylor University showed that COPD patients who

took part in the program experienced big improvements in spirometry testing, which measures how much air your lungs can hold and how quickly you can breathe in and out. They were also able to walk farther without getting breathless.

Plus, says Williams, they have a great time. "They love being out with other people who have COPD. It's so empowering to learn to be in control of their breath. It's easy and inexpensive — and boy, is it fun!"

Learn more at copdfoundation.org or contact swilliams@copdfoundation.com

We're Here for You

Your Case Manager can connect you to the resources you need.

Just call
1-833-609-0735.



Healthy Eating Made Simple

Elizabeth Ferrer, R.D., AvMed's Registered Dietitian, shares her favorite tips for happier, healthier meals — without feeling deprived.

Plan a few meals (get the family involved!) and build a grocery list from there. And don't forget to restock staples. I like to take a photo of my pantry and fridge to remind myself of what I need. Or, keep a running list on the fridge that everyone can add to as things run out.

Don't be brand loyal.

Prices can vary from brand to brand. Compare prices and try different brands when they're on sale or if

you have a coupon. Try store brands too. They're almost always less expensive, and the quality is just as good.

Keep it simple. It's a myth that eating healthy is more costly. It's not about elaborate meals and exotic superfoods. Focus on

basic ingredients and simple recipes. Practice habits like repurposing foods — leftovers are a great way to stretch the budget — and get the family involved in planning and cooking. Eating well doesn't mean going broke.

Be a Super Shopper!

Healthy, delicious food on a budget? Yes, you can! Elizabeth Ferrer, R.D., AvMed's registered dietitian, shows you five simple ways to conquer the checkout line and be a star in the kitchen.

Protein for pennies.

Protein is important, but it doesn't have to come from the meat counter. Beans, peas, and chickpeas are inexpensive plant-based options. A pound of dry lentils costs only a couple of dollars and can make a large pot of lentil soup. With a salad on the side, you've got a low-cost, high-protein (and delicious) meal.

Do a deep freeze.

Fresh produce can be expensive and goes bad

so quickly. Instead, head to the freezer aisle. Frozen fruits and vegetables have the same nutritional value as fresh. (But check labels and avoid added salt, sugar, and sauces.) Keep



frozen veggies on hand to add to pastas, soups, stir fry, or even convenience foods like mac and cheese for a health boost.

Make a list. Knowing exactly what you need when you go to the store can save time and money.

Recipe



Cantaloupe, Cucumber, and Jicama Salsa

Serves 8 / Serving size: ½ cup
Prep time: 20 minutes

Sweet and savory with a cool crunch, this budget-friendly salsa is great on tacos or with grilled fish or chicken.

Ingredients

- 1 cup finely chopped cantaloupe
- 1 cucumber, chopped
- 1 medium jicama (or 2 tart apples), peeled and chopped
- 2 green onions, finely chopped
- Juice of 1 lime
- ¼ tsp. chili powder (optional)

Directions

In a large bowl, gently mix together all ingredients. Let sit 10 minutes at room temperature to allow flavors to marry.

Handy Hint: New to jicama? Nicknamed the “Mexican potato,” this nutritious root veggie is juicy and crunchy, like an apple, with a mildly sweet flavor.

Calories: 45
Fat: 0 g (0 g sat. fat)
Carbs: 11 g (4 g fiber)
Protein: 1 g
Sodium: 10 mg