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PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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November is COPD Awareness Month

Understanding COPD

COPD is a common lung disease that obstructs the airways, making breathing difficult. COPD stands for **Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease**.

Chronic means it won't go away.

Obstructive means partly blocked.

Pulmonary means in the lungs.

Disease means sickness.

People with COPD include those with chronic bronchitis and emphysema.

What are the symptoms of COPD?

Often, the earliest symptom of COPD is a cough that won't go away, accompanied by sputum (phlegm) production. The most common symptom of COPD is shortness of breath on exertion, such as when walking quickly or climbing stairs. The shortness of breath gets worse as the disease develops, and many people with COPD have trouble even walking a short distance.

What causes COPD?

The most important cause of COPD is smoking. "Secondhand smoke" also can cause COPD. Dust and chemicals on the job can cause COPD when the exposure is intense or prolonged.

How do I know if I have COPD?

If you have symptoms of COPD as described above and a history of exposure to the risk factors that cause the disease, talk to your doctor or health care provider about COPD. The earlier the disease is found, the better the results of treatment.

How is COPD treated?

COPD can't be cured, but there are treatments that can help patients feel better. Treatment includes pulmonary rehabilitation programs, oxygen therapy, bronchodilators to control symptoms, and using inhaled steroids to reduce inflammation in the lungs.

For more information about COPD, talk to your doctor or healthcare provider or visit www.uscopd.com.

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The mission of the Pinellas County Health Department is to promote, protect and improve the health and safety of residents and visitors through public and private community efforts.