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**PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## November is Lung Cancer & COPD Awareness Month

***Are You At Risk for Lung Cancer?*** Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death. More people die of lung cancer than of colon, breast, and prostate cancers combined. According to the American Cancer Society, 87% of lung cancer deaths are caused by smoking. **Quitting smoking now greatly reduces the risk of lung cancer.**

In addition to smoking, there are other **risk factors** that increase a person's chance of getting lung cancer.

- **Occupational exposure** to asbestos, radon, coal products, and other industrial/chemical products also increase risk for lung cancer.
- **Other diseases** such as tuberculosis (TB) and some types of pneumonia often leave scars on the lung that can increase the risk of developing lung cancer.
- **Air pollution** in some cities may slightly increase the risk of lung cancer, but the risk is far less than the risk caused by smoking.
- **Family history** of lung cancer may slightly increase risk.
- **Diet** low in fruits and vegetables might increase the risk of lung cancer in people who are exposed to tobacco smoke.
- **Prevention** - Some people who get cancer do not have any risk factors, so it is not possible to prevent all cases of lung cancer. The best way to prevent lung cancer is not to smoke and to avoid people who do.

For more information about lung cancer, talk to your doctor or healthcare provider or visit [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov) or [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).

### ***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; and **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. **What causes COPD?** The most important cause of COPD is smoking. Secondhand smoke also can cause COPD. Dust and chemicals at home or 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, flu shots to help prevent infection, 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](http://www.uscopd.com).

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