



# The Beacon

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## Med-Cert Medical Management Resources

*“Guiding your way to better health management”*

### November is COPD Awareness Month

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

- **Chronic** means it will not go away.
- **Obstructive** means partly blocked
- **Pulmonary** means in the lungs
- **Disease** means sickness

Patients with COPD include those with chronic bronchitis and emphysema. Data from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicate that at least 10.5 million people have COPD, yet a recent study shows that only 17% of American adults know that **COPD is a respiratory disease.**

### What are the Symptoms of COPD

In many patients, the earliest symptom of COPD is a **“cough that won’t go away”**, frequently accompanied by sputum (phlegm) production. The most characteristic symptom of the disease is **shortness of breath** on exertion, such as walking quickly or climbing stairs. As the disease progresses, this shortness of breath becomes more severe, and patients may have trouble walking even a short distance or performing everyday activities such as showering or dressing.

### What Causes COPD?

The most important cause of COPD is cigarette smoking. Pipe, cigar, and other types of tobacco smoking are also risk factors of COPD, and passive

(“secondhand”) exposure to cigarette smoke contributes to respiratory symptoms and COPD.

Dusts and chemicals (vapors, irritants, and fumes) encountered on the job can also cause COPD when the exposures are sufficiently intense or prolonged.

### How can I prevent COPD?

Quitting smoking is the single most effective way to prevent the development of COPD. If you already have COPD, quitting smoking can slow or stop the progression of the disease.

**IT IS NEVER TO LATE TO QUIT SMOKING**

### How do I know if I have COPD?

If you have symptoms of COPD and a history of exposure to the risk factors that cause the disease, you should ask your doctor about COPD. The earlier it is detected, the better the results of treatment. A diagnosis of COPD should be confirmed by a **lung function** test. This is best done by spirometry, which is performed in a health care clinic to measure forced vital capacity (FVC) and forced expiratory volume in second (FEV1).

### How is COPD treated?

COPD cannot be cured, but effective treatment is available that helps patients feel better and slows the damage to the lungs. Medicines for COPD include bronchodilators to control symptoms, influenza vaccines to prevent infections, and inhaled steroids to reduce the inflammation in the lungs. Other

treatments that may be appropriate for some COPD patients are pulmonary rehabilitations programs, oxygen therapy and, in very limited situations, surgery.

### Did You Know...



Breath mints can actually lead to bad breath, because most contain sugar, which odor-causing bacteria feed on. Moreover, sugar can promote teeth decay, which may also sour your breath. In addition, the alcohol in breath mints dries out your mouth, so there is less saliva to wash bacteria away.

### POWER OVER CANCER BEGINS WITH ACCURATE INFORMATION

1.3 million Americans will be diagnosed with cancer in 2004. Accurate information is key to survival.

***Dismantling Cancer***, the new book by cancer specialist, Francisco Contreras, MD and his research team, has just been released and it clearly explains:

- Practical things you can do to lower your risk of getting cancer
- What treatments work and what treatments don't work
- Breakthrough non-toxic therapies
- How to combine conventional therapies with alternative therapies for better results
- The benefits of a body, mind and spirit approach

If you would like a free copy of *Dismantling Cancer* or know someone who does, call 1-888-500-HOPE. The phone call and the book are free and you will not be asked to purchase anything.



## Your Toes Know

Get yourself ready for sleep by warming up your feet.

In addition to having a quiet, dark room to sleep in, having warm feet also may help trigger sleepy feelings, research suggests. The body naturally dilates blood vessels in the hands and feet and releases heat from these extremities in preparation for sleep. Warming your feet with socks and then removing the socks would mimic this sleep preparation process.

**Benefit:** Getting 6 to 8 hours of sleep per night can make your RealAge as much as 3 years younger.

## Keep the **K** Steady

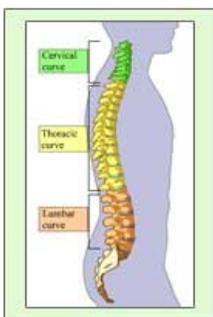
If you take anti-coagulant or blood thinning medications, watch your vitamin K intake.

Studies show that people who regularly take anti-coagulants, such as to prevent blood clots that could lead to heart attack or stroke, may be greatly affected by variations in their vitamin K intake. Do not increase your intake of vitamin K-rich foods, such as broccoli, cauliflower, or Brussels sprouts, without checking with your doctor first.

**Benefit:** Avoiding drug interactions can make your RealAge as much as 0.7 years younger.

## SOME BACK KNOWLEDGE

### Normal Spinal Curves



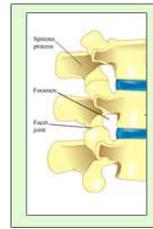
The spine is made up of stacked bones (vertebrae) and cushions of soft tissue (discs). When seen from the side they form the three natural curves of the spine. The cervical curve is the neck area. The thoracic curve is at the chest level and the lumbar curve is the lower back. The sacrum and coccyx are two fused bones at the bottom of the spine. Viewed from back to front, the spinal column should be in a straight line. When properly aligned, it keeps the body balanced and comfortable.

## Vertebrae and Discs

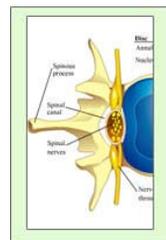
The vertebrae are the 24 irregularly shaped bones that, along with the sacrum and coccyx, form the spinal column and create the spinal canal.

This bony tunnel protects the spinal cord.

Discs are the shock absorbers between the vertebrae. Each has a jelly-like center, the nucleus, surrounded by a tough covering, the annulus. The discs provide flexibility by changing shape as you bend backwards (extension), forwards (flexion) and sideways.



## Spinal Cord and Nerves



The spinal cord lies protected within the spinal canal. Spinal nerves exit from it, through foramen, small openings formed when vertebrae are stacked together.

## Herniated Disc

Discs are the cushions between the vertebrae -- the bones -- of your spine. When the ligaments or the supporting structures of the discs become weak, usually from excessive strain, the gel within the disc can bulge, protrude, or extrude. This is commonly referred to as a herniated, ruptured, or slipped disc. When this occurs, the nerves from the spinal cord may become compressed, causing back pain and shooting pain down the legs called sciatica.

## Spinal Stenosis

Spinal stenosis is a narrowing of the spinal canal. This may be related to osteoarthritis or may be caused by an abnormal thickening of the spine, which makes the space around the cord narrower. Patients frequently have back pain that is worse when standing up straight.

## Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis is a condition in which bones gradually become weak and vulnerable to injury. The weakened vertebrae may collapse or fracture. These compression fractures may be painful and result in loss of height and may distort the curvature of the spine.

## Osteoarthritis

Degenerative disc disease and bone spurs are common results of osteoarthritis of the spine. In osteoarthritis, cartilage becomes brittle and wears away. The cartilaginous discs or cushions between the bodies of the vertebrae -- the bones of the spine -- degenerate, resulting in narrowing of the disc space and pain. The cartilage caps of the facet joints wear, which causes pain and loss of flexibility. Further, the narrowed space and the spurring can pinch the spinal nerves, resulting in pain and tingling down the legs -- a condition called sciatica.

## Med-Cert provides:

*Utilization Management, Maternity Management, Large Case and Wellness Disease Management, Transplant Coordination and Stop Loss Assessments*

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**We are on the Internet. Visit us at:**

[www.medcertinc.com](http://www.medcertinc.com)

## Recipe Corner

### FRENCH ONION BAGEL SOUP



Put 1 Tbsp. Extra virgin olive oil and 4 cups thinly sliced onion (peel, cut in half, then slice) in a large saucepan. Cook and stir over medium low heat until onions are transparent. This takes a while! Add 24 oz beef broth and 2 oz. dry sherry, and bring to boil. Then cover, turn down heat, and simmer for 8 minutes.

Toast one bagel, and cut the halves into thin halves again, so you have four bagel slices. Put one slice in bowl, and cover with half the onion soup. Top with the second thin slice, then with a layer of provolone cheese. Pop under broiler or into a 425-degree oven until cheese melts. This is good soup! It makes two generous servings.



This newsletter is brought to you courtesy of Med-Cert, Inc. Our sources for this edition were WebMD, US COPD Coalition, Real Age - Health Tools and Tips for Living Younger, and the RecipeSource web sites.