COPD AND YOU

Early Diagnosis Can Slow Disease Progression

It is estimated that more than 384 million people worldwide live with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). More than 16 million Americans have COPD, and nearly 16 million more have COPD but don’t know it.

While many are not diagnosed with COPD until age 40 or later, early signs of COPD can be found in adults as young as 20 years old. Here’s the good news: If COPD is discovered and treated very early, the damage to your lungs may be reversible.

Here’s how you can look for, listen to, and act on any symptoms as quickly as possible to reduce long-term damage and improve your quality of life:

- **Look for early symptoms of COPD.** Common symptoms of COPD and other lung conditions include:
  - Coughing (with or without mucus)
  - Wheezing or noisy breathing
  - Chest tightness
  - Shortness of breath
  - Unusual tiredness

- **Listen to your body and your loved ones:**
  - Have you had any symptoms of COPD?
  - Have you noticed your loved ones experiencing COPD symptoms?
    - Caregivers may be the first to notice COPD symptoms.
    - It is easy to overlook mild COPD symptoms.
    - *Don’t dismiss your symptoms. When in doubt, check it out.*

- **Act quickly if you notice symptoms of COPD:**
  - Contact your health care provider as soon as you feel symptoms.
  - **Getting treatment early can help prevent or slow the progression of your COPD.**
  - There are tests available to diagnose COPD.
    - Spirometry testing is one way to tell if you have COPD. Spirometry is a breathing test that’s fast, painless, and can be performed in a physician’s office or hospital.

References: