

STRESS AND EMOTIONS

COPD Community Exercise Clinic

Stress is something that affects everyone in some form; it is how you respond to the stress that impacts your health.

Stress increases your heart rate, blood pressure and breathing rate, resulting in the Fight Or Flight response.

Stress is a known COPD trigger. It may cause you to become short of breath, breathe shallow, and your muscles tense up. These physical responses produce anxiety which only increases your shortness of breath. Consequently you limit your activities because your breathing is laboured. Your anxiety increases because you feel physically unable to do activity. This adds to your shortness of breath and continues this negative cycle.

When a stressful situation arises focus on following the positive stress cycle.

This helps to improve our mindset or mood and there are fewer physical stress reactions or behaviours.

The more we practice this positive self talk and experiences the benefits, the more our reaction is reinforced, and we are more confident during more circumstances.



Stress Management Strategies



Breathing Exercises such as diaphragmatic breathing and belly breathing



Communicate your feelings with trusted family members or friends. Or talk with a clergy member.



Physical Activity and Exercise can help to release muscle tension and refocus your mind. It is a great stress reliever.



Follow your COPD Action Plan, when your COPD is well-managed, you will have more energy for the things you enjoy



Practice Relaxation Techniques such as deep breathing, visualization, letting go of negative thoughts, and muscle relaxation exercises are all simple ways to release tension and reduce stress



Set limits on your commitments. Do not take on too much. Take care of yourself by letting go and learning to say no. If you work, talk with your boss about ways to manage your workload so you do not feel overwhelmed.

Additional Resources

[Lung Health Support Groups Ontario](http://www.lunghealth.ca) (www.lunghealth.ca)

[Bounceback Ontario](https://bounceback.ca) (<https://bounceback.ca>)