

THE LUNG ASSOCIATION™

Fredericton, NB. November 16, 2011 – Something as simple as catching a cold or flu, or going outside on a very cold day can trigger a “lung attack” for someone with a serious lung disease known as COPD.

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is more commonly known as emphysema and chronic bronchitis; it is a progressive lung disease that, over time, makes it hard to breathe.

A COPD flare-up happens when [COPD symptoms](#) get worse, or when new symptoms develop. Flare-ups are also called *exacerbations* or “*lung attacks*”. Left untreated, COPD flare-ups can have deadly consequences.

“An acute flare-up of COPD symptoms can be as serious as a heart attack, causing significant and lasting damage to the lungs or airways, and may result in the need for hospitalization and even death,” says Dr. Paul Hernandez, a COPD spokesperson for the Canadian Lung Association. “

According to a Canadian study recently published in *The Lancet*, a British medical journal, one in four women and one in three men, aged 35 and older, are at risk of developing the condition by age 80.

COPD is a major cause for hospital stays and emergency room visits across Canada, according to a 2010 study by the Canadian Thoracic Society, the medical section of the

Canadian Lung Association.¹ The study found that reducing COPD flare-ups of the disease can help to reduce hospitalizations.²

“If you have COPD, it is important to prevent flare-ups and understand the signs and symptoms of flare-ups,” says Dr. Hernandez, a respirologist at the Queen Elizabeth II Health Sciences Centre, in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

“Patients can reduce the risk of flare-ups by ensuring that they take medications as prescribed, follow their doctor’s advice about vaccinations for flu and pneumonia, quit smoking, and engage in regular physical activity,” says Donna Goodridge, a professor at the University of Saskatchewan College of Nursing and a co-chair of the COPD Clinical Assembly. “Families and caregivers also play an important role in improving a patient’s quality of life, and that’s why we encourage them to contact their local Lung Association for help.”

The Canadian Lung Association offers support and advice on COPD through its free COPD helpline, 1-866-717-COPD (2673).

[How to prevent flare-ups](#)

[Warning signs and symptoms of a flare-up](#)

[What to do if you have a flare-up and when to get emergency help](#)

About the Canadian Lung Association

Established in 1900, The Lung Association is one of Canada’s oldest and most respected health charities, and the leading national organization for science-based information, research, education, support programs and advocacy on lung health issues.

About the Canadian Thoracic Society (CTS)

The CTS is the medical section of The Canadian Lung Association. It advises the Association on scientific matters and programs, including policies regarding support for

¹ Canadian Thoracic Society, The Human and Economic Burden of COPD: A leading cause of hospital admission in Canada http://www.lung.ca/cts-sct/pdf/COPDReport_E.pdf

² Ibid.

research and education. The CTS provides a forum whereby medical practitioners and investigators may join in the study of lung diseases, develop clinical practice guidelines based on best science, and provide continuing education to medical and healthcare professionals.

The CTS aims to maintain the highest professional and scientific standards in all aspects of respiratory diseases through leadership, education, research and communication.

About the Canadian Respiratory Health Professionals (CRHP)

The Canadian Respiratory Health Professionals (CRHP) is the Lung Association's multidisciplinary allied health professional section. The CRHP welcomes nurses, respiratory therapists, cardio-pulmonary physiotherapists, pharmacists, and other allied health professional working in the respiratory field.

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