What does Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) mean?

- COPD is a lung disease
- The airways that carry air to the lungs become narrowed and it becomes harder to breathe.
- There are tiny air sacs where the airways end in the lungs.
- These air sacs don’t empty and the lungs feel full when someone has COPD.
- Besides feeling short of breath, your client may cough more often and cough up mucous.
- Shortness of breath may keep your client from doing things they would like to do.

✓ COPD is a term used to describe a group of chronic diseases (adult asthma, chronic bronchitis, and emphysema) that causes the client to have difficulty inhaling and/or exhaling air from the lungs.

✓ Usually there are permanent physical changes in the lungs and alveoli.

✓ This condition is also known as chronic lung disease.

✓ Smoking, lengthy exposure to air pollutants and chronic irritation from dust and fumes in the workplace are factors that contribute to COPD.
The Aide’s role in assisting clients with COPD:

- Assist the client to monitor for changes in symptoms and report increased shortness of breath with usual activity level, changes in cough or sputum production.
- Encourage clients to take medications as prescribed and use inhalers correctly, to use oxygen therapy as prescribed.
- Encourage clients to eat a balanced diet with adequate fluids and fiber and to use strategies to minimize shortness of breath during eating.
- Encourage clients to stop smoking – even when already diagnosed with COPD, smoking cessation is the single most effective intervention in stopping disease progression.
- Encourage clients to reduce infection risk through good hand washing and avoiding exposure to others with upper respiratory infections.
- Encourage clients to reduce exposure to lung irritants such as extreme temperatures, poor air quality, indoor pollutants, and tobacco smoke.
- Encourage clients to get adequate sleep.
- Encourage clients to increase activity/exercise and use strategies for energy conservation as prescribed by their physician.

Observe for changes in your client and report to your supervisor if the client:

- Has increased shortness of breath with usual activity
- Is coughing more than usual
- Has increased sputum or changes in color
- Is using short acting medicines more often
- Feels more tired or restless

Never smoke in a home where oxygen is being used!

Conserving Energy:
Teach your clients how to pace their activities or do them in an easier way. They will do more and be less short of breath.

Be sure to follow Oxygen safety precautions—see the additional information at the end of the newsletter for more on Oxygen! Check with your agency and follow policies and procedures related to Oxygen safety. Follow fire safety precautions with Oxygen use in the client’s Home. The danger of fire and explosion in the home is always present when oxygen is being used!

IN-HOME AIDES - PARTNERS IN QUALITY CARE - July 2013

Remember * COPD self-care management poses significant challenges for the patient and caregiver. In addition to managing oral medications, patients often must manage oxygen delivery systems and various inhalers.
Supplemental Oxygen

Oxygen is an element, a gas, and a drug that can help people who have certain lung diseases. The cells in the body get their energy from the interaction of oxygen with food. The energy produced is used to do everything from breathing, to carrying out bodily functions, to going to the grocery store. Sometimes with COPD, lung function is reduced to the extent that supplemental oxygen (also called oxygen therapy) is needed to continue normal bodily functions and may also help them be more active.

For people who do not get enough oxygen naturally, supplements of oxygen can have several benefits. Oxygen therapy can improve their sleep and mood, increase their mental alertness and stamina, and allow their bodies to carry out normal functions. It also prevents heart failure in people with severe lung disease.

There are three ways oxygen therapy is supplied:

**Compressed oxygen gas** and **liquid oxygen** are two ways to have oxygen delivered to the home. Oxygen gas is stored in tanks or cylinders of steel or aluminum. These tanks come in many sizes; larger ones are usually used at home, and smaller ones are used for leaving the house. Liquid oxygen is made by cooling the oxygen gas, which changes it to a liquid form. It is often used by people who are more active because larger amounts of oxygen can be stored in smaller, more convenient containers than compressed oxygen. The disadvantage is that it cannot be kept for a long time because it will evaporate.

**Oxygen concentrators** are also available to use in the home. An oxygen concentrator is an electric device about the size of an end table. It produces oxygen by concentrating the oxygen that is already in the air and removing other gases. This method is less expensive, easier to
maintain, and doesn't require refilling. Some oxygen concentrators, however, give off heat and are noisy. Other drawbacks are that you may notice an increase in your electricity bill, and you will need a back-up source of oxygen in case of a power failure. There are now several reliable portable oxygen concentrators that allow people using them to easily leave the home, go to work, enjoy recreational activities and travel.

You might need oxygen therapy all of the time or just part of the time. A doctor's prescription is required for supplemental oxygen.

There are important safety factors to keep in mind when using oxygen. Oxygen is a safe gas and is non-flammable, however, it supports combustion. Materials burn more readily in an oxygen-enriched environment. The American Lung Association offers the following safety tips for oxygen use:

- Avoid open flames in the presence of oxygen use - e.g. matches, cigarette lighters, candles, and burning tobacco. Insist that people who wish to smoke step outside your home to protect your lungs and your home.
- Caution must also be used around other sources of heat, such as electric or gas heaters and/or stoves – at least 5 feet is a recommended distance between oxygen and other heat sources.
- People using oxygen should avoid using lotions or creams containing petroleum. The combustion of flammable products containing petroleum can also be supported by the presence of oxygen. Use water-based products instead.
- It is important to store cylinders safely - cylinders should be upright and secure, in an approved cart or device for storage.
- Remember when not in use, oxygen supply valves should be turned off.
- Always follow the instructions of your oxygen supply company regarding safe usage.

For more information call the American Lung Association Lung HelpLine at 1-800-LUNG-USA (1-800-586-4872)