

## **COPD, Asthma, and Covid-19 Vaccines**

You might be wondering what COVID-19 means for you or someone you know with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) or Asthma. We understand you may also have questions about the importance of COVID-19 vaccines.

### **Here is What You Need to Know:**

COPD is a chronic medical condition. It is the leading cause of hospital admission among all chronic illnesses in Canada. There are two forms of COPD: a) Emphysema (air sac damage resulting in too much air in the lungs) and b) Chronic Bronchitis (airway damage causing scarring and excessive mucus). Thus, what COPD simply means is that it is:

CHRONIC: it won't go away

OBSTRUCTIVE: it is partly blocked

PULMONARY: it is in the lung

DISEASE: it is an illness

Asthma is also a respiratory disease that results in airway inflammation, tightening, and mucus, making it harder to breathe. Asthma is called Reactive Airway Disease because of its trademark of overreactive responses in the airways due to triggered sensitivities.

Fortunately, people with COPD and Asthma are not at higher risk of getting the coronavirus. However, if people with these underlying conditions do get COVID-19, they are at high risk for complications and poorer outcomes. This is because the lungs are the primary target for the coronavirus as the virus invades lung tissues after it is inhaled. This can cause further inflammation and breathing problems in addition to your respiratory disease. If this worsens, pneumonia can develop causing further lung inflammation. This can be potentially life-threatening for someone with respiratory disease.

### **Here is What You Need to Do:**

#### **A. Preventing Coronavirus (You Know the Drill):**

- Stay at home
- Avoid sick people
- Practice social distancing and wear a mask
- Handwashing
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects
- Reduce your stress

- Get exercise as prescribed by your healthcare provider
- Stay in contact with your healthcare providers
- Follow your treatment plan as prescribed and have an action plan in place.

In addition to protecting yourself from the virus, it is important to take your medications and inhalers as prescribed to maintain optimal health. Poorly managed COPD or Asthma can lead to serious consequences if you were to catch coronavirus.

### **B. Lung Disease and COVID-19 Vaccines:**

People with Asthma and COPD are at higher risk for serious problems from COVID-19. The good news is that there are COVID-19 vaccines. Getting vaccinated is an important step in preventing coronavirus. Immunization provides the best protection against vaccine-preventable diseases such as coronavirus.

#### **Did you Know:**

- Asthma Canada supports the Global Initiative for Asthma's guidance about COVID-19 and asthma and recommends COVID-19 vaccination for people with asthma
- The Canadian Thoracic Society's (CTS) COVID-19 Respiratory Roundtable panel representing Canadians living with lung disease, recommends COVID-19 vaccines and suggest it is our 'Best shot' at beating COVID-19.
- The CTS guidelines recommend vaccinations to reduce complications of lung exacerbations, including self-management education, smoking cessation, exercise, and an action plan for those living with respiratory diseases.

As Canadians living with any lung disease such as asthma, COPD, cystic fibrosis, lung cancer, pulmonary hypertension, and pre-and post-lung transplant, the COVID-19 vaccine is the 'Best shot' at beating COVID-19. Consider this vaccine as your suit of respiratory armor and then 'Just Breathe.' Because when you can't breathe...nothing else matters.

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