OCTOBER

HEALTHY LUNG MONTH

October is National Healthy Lung Month, a time dedicated to raising awareness about the importance of lung health and sharing steps everyone can take to protect their respiratory system. While many people associate lung cancer and other serious lung conditions with smoking, anyone can be at risk. In fact, up to 20 percent of people diagnosed with lung cancer in the United States have never smoked. This highlights the importance for everyone to be proactive about lung health.

Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death among both men and women. Due to the lungs' extensive network of blood vessels, cancer can easily spread from the lungs to other parts of the body.

Why Lung Health Matters

Your lungs play a vital role in keeping you healthy by delivering oxygen to your body and removing carbon dioxide. Because of this essential function, it is important to keep your lungs healthy. Lung diseases such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and lung cancer can significantly reduce your quality of life by making it harder to breathe and perform daily activities. Early prevention and regular care are key to maintaining strong, healthy lungs. Taking proactive steps to prevent lung disease and practicing regular lung care (i.e., pursed lip breathing) are essential to maintaining strong, healthy lungs and supporting your overall well-being.

Breathing exercises help remove stale air from the lungs, increase oxygen levels, and enable the diaphragm to work more effectively, which is important for people with conditions like asthma or COPD. Techniques such as pursed lip breathing and belly (diaphragmatic) breathing can improve lung function, making it easier to breathe and stay active. Click **HERE** for a 3-step pursed lip breathing exercise.

Tips for Healthy Lungs

1. Prevent illness by washing your hands, avoiding crowds during cold and flu season, wearing a mask when needed, and staying up to date on vaccines

2. Stay active by regularly exercising — walking or cycling can help keep your lungs strong

3. Don't smoke and avoid secondhand smoke — if possible. If you want to quit, or are looking for helpful resources, seek help **HERE**

4. Limit exposure to air pollution and chemicals, and check the air quality

5. Schedule regular check-ups with your doctor

Protecting your lungs is a lifelong commitment. By taking preventive steps, staying informed, and seeking regular medical care, you can help ensure your lungs stay healthy for years to come. Speak with your doctor about lung cancer screenings and determine if they are appropriate for you.

Sources:

- https://vnahg.org/healthy-lung-month-how-to-keep-your-lungs-healthy/

- https://healthylearn.com/connerstrong/hc/lung-cancer.html

- https://www.lung.org/lung-health-diseases/wellness/breathing-exercises

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