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RESPIRATORY HEALTH ASSOCIATION℠
of Metropolitan Chicago

Catch Your Breath.®

Women & Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

- COPD is the fourth leading cause of death, and of the top five causes of death, it is the only one that is on the rise[1].
- COPD encompasses two types of lung disease, emphysema and chronic bronchitis, both of which act to limit airflow within the lungs. Both lead to physical and chemical changes in the lung, which ultimately alter the ability of the COPD patient to exchange oxygen and breathe[1].
- Although prevalence of COPD is high among Caucasians, the incidence is rising at an alarming rate especially among Caucasian women and African American women and men, with AA women having the highest mortality rate among all groups[2].
- Since 1987, women have had higher rates of self-reported COPD than men, and during 1980-1996, the trend for COPD increased for women but not for men[3].
- In 2000, for the first time, more women died from COPD than men[1].
- Research suggests that women may be more susceptible than men to the development of COPD. One of the explanations may be that women have smaller lungs and smaller airways, and thus develop COPD at lower smoking levels than men[4].
- Studies have suggested that clinical manifestation of COPD is different for women in comparison to men[5].
- Women with COPD are found to have a lower health-related quality of life score than men, more frequent exacerbations, decreased response to exercise, increased difficulty in breathing and better response to oxygen therapy[5].

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1 National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute. *It Has a Name: COPD.*
2 Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago. *COPD: Epidemiology, Health Disparities Identified.* Fact Sheet.
3 Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease Surveillance – United States, 1971-2000. *MMWR* August 2, 2002; 51 (SS-6):1-16.
4 Petty TL. The rising epidemic of COPD in women: Why women are more susceptible; how treatment should differ. *Women Health Primary Care.* 1999; 2(12): 942-953.
5 Torres JP, Casanova C, Hernandez C, Abreau J, Aguirre-Jame A, Celli BR. Gender and COPD patients attending a pulmonary clinic. *Chest* 2005; 128: 2012-6.

Chicago's Lung Health Leader Since 1906

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Catch Your Breath®: A Women & Lung Health Initiative