



HEALTHY You ... 5 to 95



**Snack foods that
promote better sleep**

Understanding COPD

**Recommended
immunizations for those
age 50+**



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Snack foods that promote better sleep



According to the National Sleep Foundation, changes in sleep patterns are a part of the aging process. Many people experience difficulty falling asleep and then staying asleep as they age, and that difficulty can make men and women over 50 feel more tired during the day.

But even though difficulty sleeping may be a part of aging, that does not mean men and women over 50 cannot take steps to improve their sleeping patterns. For example, certain snack foods may help to improve quality of sleep, especially when these foods replace less healthy snacking options. While men and women over 50 should always consult with their physicians before making any changes to their diets, the AARP notes that the following are a handful of snack foods that promote better sleep.

- Almonds: Magnesium is a mineral with muscle-relaxing properties, and almonds contain enough magnesium to help men and women get a better night's sleep. A small amount of almonds before bed might be enough to make falling and staying asleep easier.

- Bananas: Much like almonds, bananas provide a substantial amount of magnesium. Bananas also contain the amino acid tryptophan, which many people associate with Thanksgiving turkey. While tryptophan might be most often associated with the sleepiness people feel after eating a holiday meal, it also has been linked to better sleep quality, so a banana shortly before bed might be just what you need to fall and stay asleep.

- Cheese and crackers: One more traditional snack may just help you get a better night's sleep. Cheese and crackers contain tryptophan and carbohydrates, which can induce a better night's sleep and help you fall asleep sooner.

- Cherries: Cherries contain the sleep hormone melatonin, and the AARP notes that recent studies indicated that participants who drank tart cherry juice on a daily basis fell asleep more quickly and slept longer and better than participants who did not.

- Hummus: The primary ingredient in hummus is chickpeas, which are loaded with tryptophan, folate and vitamin B6. Folate has proven especially beneficial to older men and women who need help regulating their sleep patterns, while vitamin B6 helps the body regulate its clock.

- Peanut butter: Peanut butter is another snacking item loaded with tryptophan. Spread some peanut butter on a carbohydrate, whether it's a slice of toast or some crackers, before going to bed, and you may enjoy a better, longer sleep.

- Walnuts: Like cherries, walnuts contain melatonin, which can contribute to a longer, more restful night's sleep. Walnuts also can help regulate stress, which is a leading cause of sleeping difficulty.

Many men and women experience difficulty sleeping as they age. But the right foods may just help combat such problems and help men and women get a more adequate night's sleep.

Recommended immunizations for those age 50+

Routine immunizations can keep people safe and healthy. Certain vaccinations can prevent diseases from producing symptoms, while others can lessen the duration of an illness or make conditions less severe.

Vaccination schedules become a way of life for parents to young children. But vaccinations aren't just for kids, and adults should keep tabs on their immunization histories to ensure they're up-to-date with vaccinations for their particular age group and lifestyle.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention warns that the elderly are more likely to die of a vaccine-preventable disease than other age groups. The immune system begins to decline as we age, so the body can benefit from the disease-fighting boost provided by vaccinations. Individuals at any age should discuss immunizations with their doctors, but it's a particularly important conversation for those age 50 and older.

Vaccine schedules and recommendations may vary depending on where a person lives, but the following immunization recommendations are offered courtesy of the CDC.

- **Influenza:** An annual flu shot can help prevent the nearly 36,000 deaths that occur due to flu each year in the United States. The flu vaccine is designed to combat the current strain of flu, so it is recommended anytime between September to March, which is the prime flu season. People age 50 and older should opt for the injection rather than the nasal form of the vaccine.

- **Tdap:** This vaccine protects against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis and is especially necessary for people who have close contact with young infants. Pertussis, or whooping cough, can be passed on to youngsters and make them very ill. If you've never received a Tdap vaccine, the CDC suggests getting it at least once. Individual tetanus boosters should be received every 10 years.

- **Pneumococcal:** Pneumococcal disease is an infection caused by the pneumococcus bacteria. It can cause pneumonia, blood infection, ear infections, and even bacterial meningitis. This vaccine is given to adults age 65 and older or to younger adults at their physicians' discretion.

- **Hepatitis A:** Individuals with medical, occupational or lifestyle conditions, such as healthcare workers or people with chronic liver disease, may need a two-dose series of the hepatitis A vaccine.


Adults who are avid travelers to various parts of the world that may bring them in contact with animals or people who do not receive the same course of immunizations may need additional vaccines. Speak with a doctor about which immunizations are recommended before travel.

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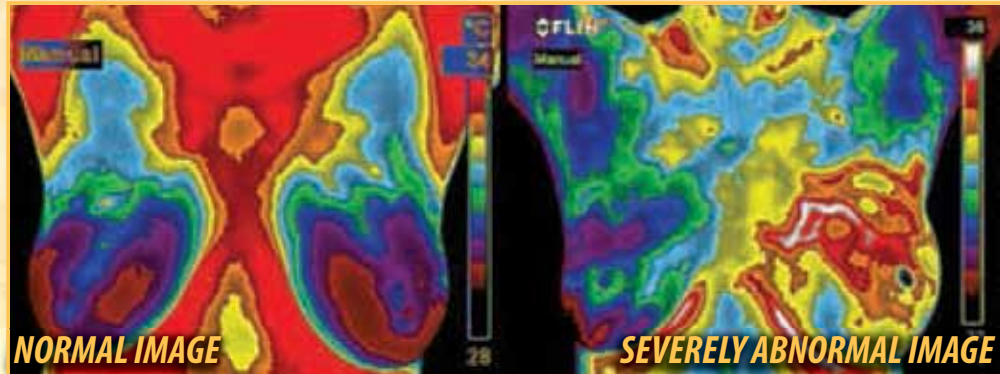
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Understanding COPD

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, commonly referred to as COPD, is an umbrella term for several lung diseases that make it difficult to breathe. The two main forms of COPD include chronic bronchitis and emphysema. Doctors now classify anyone who has emphysema or chronic bronchitis as having COPD.

COPD can cause coughing with large amounts of mucus, wheezing, shortness of breath, chest tightness, and degradation of the lungs. People who have COPD may find it difficult to engage in daily activities without becoming breathless. Symptoms may be quite similar to asthma but with an entirely different cause.

People who suffer from COPD are typically smokers or those who used to smoke. Long-term exposure to other lung irritants, such as dust or air pollution, also can contribute to COPD. COPD is a common illness among the elderly who experienced long-term exposure to either cigarette smoke or other noxious particles from fuels, chemicals and occupational dusts before more stringent environmental regulations were implemented.

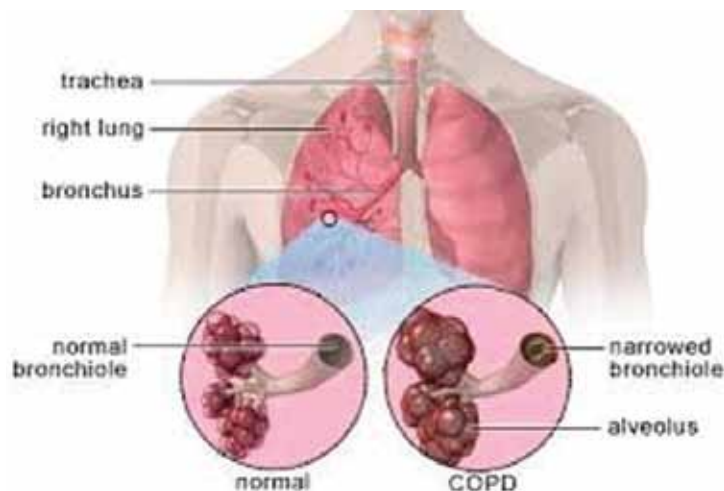
The Mayo Clinic says about 1 percent of people with COPD have the disease due to a genetic disorder that causes low levels of a protein called alpha-1-antitrypsin, or AAT. AAT is made in the liver and secreted into the bloodstream to help protect the lungs.

In healthy lungs, air travels through the trachea, or windpipe, into tubes known as bronchia that connect to the lungs. These bronchial tubes end in large bunches of air sacs, called alveoli. Small capillaries run through the walls of the alveoli to help with the exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the body.

When someone has COPD, the airways and alveoli lose their elastic quality and many air sacs may be destroyed. In addition, the walls of the bronchial tubes can become thick, inflamed and filled with mucus, prohibiting the flow of air. As a result, less oxygen is breathed into the body and passed into the bloodstream to fuel the body's needs. Lack of oxygen can lead to blueness of the lips and fingernail beds, fatigue and reduced mental acuity.

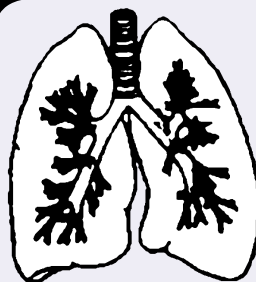
No treatment currently exists to reverse damage to the lungs or other components of the respiratory system. The majority of COPD therapies are designed to mitigate symptoms and make breathing easier. These include inhaled medications or pills taken orally. Many people with COPD may need to take medicines known as controller medications every day. In the event of a breathing attack, rescue inhalers also may be prescribed.

The COPD Foundation says other therapies also may help patients cope with COPD. Oxygen therapy can reduce strain on the heart and prevent the negative side effects of decreasing blood-oxygen levels. Learning certain breathing techniques, including abdominal and pursed-lips breathing, can reduce anxiety levels and prevent hyperventilation, which typically compounds breathing problems.



People with COPD also should improve the air quality in their homes. Allergens and air irritants can make breathing more difficult or lead to acute attacks. Install an air filtration system to keep a home clean.

Above all, quitting smoking is the most effective way to combat COPD, and smokers should speak with their physicians about smoking cessation programs and medications.



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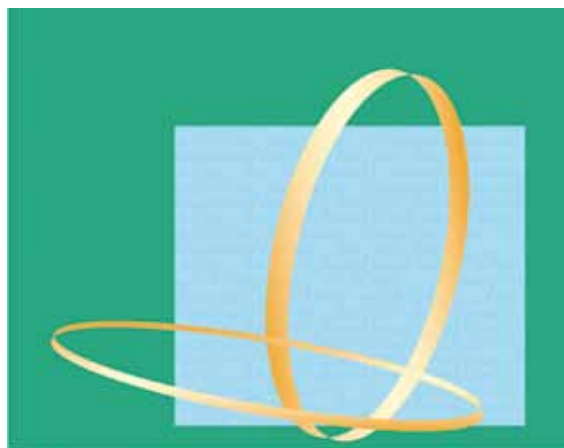
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