



Patsy Menig

CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE
PULMONARY DISORDER
(COPD)

“Those of us with COPD either make adjustments to our lifestyle or lose our quality of life.”

I'm 64, and it's important that you understand that when I was growing up, the women in cigarette commercials were beautiful. One floated down the river in a canoe with a floral dress, handsome man by her side, waterfall in the background, and smoked like it was the best thing in the world. I couldn't wait to be old enough to smoke! My addiction to cigarettes began at the age of 18.

In 2000, I was diagnosed with chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder (COPD), which I attribute to many years of smoking cigarettes.

I have been married to my husband, Joe, for 41 years, and I am the proud mother of three daughters, one son, and three granddaughters. I'm an avid gardener, love to be outside, and enjoy nature very much. But, gradually, I noticed it was difficult to lug a wheelbarrow full of mulch or replant perennials. Thankfully, I had children who were eager to help with these chores so I was still able to enjoy my gardens.

Those of us with COPD either make adjustments to our lifestyle or lose our quality of life. So, container plantings became my main focus. I could come home from the nursery, sit on a bench, and create beautiful combinations of plants for the patio.

Following a hospital stay for pneumonia in 2004, my family doctor referred me to Abington Hospital in Abington, Pennsylvania. He reviewed my CAT scans and pulmonary function test results with me and mentioned a colleague of his at Temple University Hospital who was considering candidates for Lung Volume Reduction Surgery (LVRS). I researched the procedure online, and it seemed a bit frightening—but so was not being able to breathe. I decided to take the chance.

CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE (COPD)

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is an umbrella term for conditions, including chronic bronchitis and emphysema, which impede the flow of air in the bronchi and trachea.

- COPD is caused by a mixture of chronic inflammation causing narrowing of the small airways (i.e., obstructive bronchiolitis) and destruction of the walls of the air sacs of the lungs. This causes hyperinflation in the lungs and difficulty exhaling and inhaling (i.e., emphysema). The relative contribution of this process varies among individuals.
- COPD is increasingly associated with other diseases, such as pneumonia, hypertension, heart failure, forms of heart disease, lung vascular disease, cancer, osteoporosis, and depression.

Learn more: American Thoracic Society. Breathing in America: Diseases, Progress, and Hope. New York, NY. 2010. thoracic.org/education/breathing-in-america.

I met with the thoracic surgeon who drew a picture of the lungs before and after the surgery to make sure I understood the process, which I found helpful. As they say, a picture is worth a thousand words!

My LVRS took place in late November 2005, and I was able to return to work in April 2006 following three months in a pulmonary rehab program, in which I'd exercise on my own. I found my breathing became much easier than before the surgery. I have done two things of which I'm proud and that would not have been possible prior to surgery: I climbed to the top of Barnegat Light Lighthouse in New Jersey with my granddaughter Aubrey on Valentine's Day 2007, and I nearly hiked to the top of Hawk Mountain in Pennsylvania with my daughter Alison and her husband in 2009.

I just finished my second year in a clinical trial for a new drug. I'm pleased to make this small contribution for future patients who have COPD as well as the physicians who treat them.

Patsy Menig was a patient speaker at the ATS 2013 International Conference in Philadelphia.