

HEALTH ALERT!

Breath Of Hope For Patients With Deadly Lung Disease

(NAPSA)—A former aerobics instructor loses her breath while walking up a flight of stairs. A man in his thirties notices that he gets dizzy while mowing his lawn. A young girl faints while playing sports with friends.

These people have one thing in common—Pulmonary Hypertension.

Pulmonary hypertension is a chronic and deadly lung disease for which there is no cure. It causes high blood pressure in the lungs and can lead to heart failure and death.



Pulmonary Hypertension Symptoms include:

- Dizziness
- Shortness of breath with exertion
- Extreme fatigue
- Fainting

*If these symptoms persist,
contact your doctor.*



The only drug approved to treat pulmonary hypertension requires a 24-hour infusion pump and an intravenous line implanted directly into the patient's heart. When this drug fails, the only other choice for many patients is lung transplant.

The disease can be puzzling to doctors and is often under-diagnosed or misdiagnosed. Early-stage symptoms such as shortness of breath, dizziness and fatigue are common to other diseases and some less serious conditions. Patients often must seek many different medical opinions before receiving an accurate diagnosis.

"Greater disease awareness and earlier diagnosis can help patients get the treatment they need sooner and before the disease progresses to a later stage," said Rino Aldrighetti, executive director of the Pulmonary Hypertension Association.

Shortness of breath may be a sign of a serious heart condition. Your doctor can tell you what, if anything, to do about it.

In patients with "primary" pulmonary hypertension, the disease occurs spontaneously and its cause is unknown. It is believed that in at least 10 percent of cases, the disease is hereditary. The gene for pulmonary hypertension was recently identified, offering hope for a future cure.

Other patients can have pulmonary hypertension associated with diseases such as scleroderma, lung and liver disease, HIV infection, or from having used certain appetite suppressants such as fenfluramine and dexfenfluramine (Fen-Phen).

Now, new medical breakthroughs and improved diagnosis may bring hope. Several new therapies, including more convenient oral medications, may be available very soon offering a breath of hope for thousands of patients and their families.

For more information about Pulmonary Hypertension contact the Pulmonary Hypertension Association at 301-565-3004 or visit the Web site at www.phassociation.org. To reach the patient HELP-LINE call 1-800-748-7274.

Editor's Note: While this story is useful at any time of the year, it's particularly apt during Pulmonary Hypertension Awareness Week, which for 2001 starts September 16th.