



HEALTH AWARENESS

When It's More Than Just A Cough: Early Detection And Treatment Of COPD Can Improve Quality Of Life

(NAPSA)—Diane Williams Hymons can't remember when she first noticed problems. "I'd have a coughing spell and it's almost like my breath would be cut off," she said.

Hymons is one of the more than 12 million Americans currently diagnosed with COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease). An additional 12 million may have the disease and not even know it, according to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI).

COPD is a serious lung disease that over time makes it hard to breathe. In COPD, the airways of the lungs are narrowed, making it hard to get air out and causing an "out of breath" feeling. Other symptoms can include frequent coughing, excess mucus, and sometimes wheezing.

"I would go dancing, I'd get out of breath—I was known for being able to dance the night away," says Hymons. "I gave up being a motorcycle rider because I could go into a coughing fit...I became a passenger."

Hymons sought help from her doctor. She was given a spirometry test, was diagnosed with COPD and put on a treatment plan to improve her breathing.

Most people with COPD are over 40 with a history of smoking or long-term exposure to fumes or dust in the environment. But one out of six people with COPD have never smoked. In some cases, COPD has a genetic cause.

"The first step toward breath-



Diane Williams Hymons says an accurate diagnosis and the right treatment plan have helped her manage COPD.

ing better is recognizing the symptoms and getting an accurate diagnosis. A simple breathing test called spirometry can be done right in your doctor's office to determine if you have COPD," said Dr. James P. Kiley of NHLBI.

"Your doctor will then recommend a course of treatment—many options are available to reduce symptoms, improve breathing, and help you get back to doing more of what you used to do," he said.

"I take my medications...I try to eat right, get my rest...manage my stress," said Hymons. "I'm maintaining a healthy and positive attitude."

You can find out more from the NHLBI at www.LearnAboutCOPD.org.