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## TOWARDS BETTER PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF CHRONIC DISEASES:

In the U.S., 70 percent of all deaths are due to chronic disease. Three conditions – cancer, heart disease and stroke – account for about half of these deaths. In combination with diabetes, arthritis and a few other conditions, these chronic diseases impair almost half of all adults in the two countries.

Although chronic diseases are among the most common, serious and costly health problems, they are also among the most preventable. The leading causes of chronic diseases are; Lack of physical activity, Poor nutrition, Tobacco use, and Excessive alcohol consumption.

Over the coming months the Wellness Champion Newsletter will review specific chronic conditions and how LDC members and their Families can modify their risk factors to prevent or lessen the negative effects of certain chronic diseases.

## CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE (COPD)



COPD is an umbrella term used to describe progressive lung diseases including emphysema, chronic bronchitis, refractory (non-reversible) asthma, and some forms of bronchiectasis. This disease is characterized by increasing breathlessness.

Many people mistake their increased breathlessness and coughing as a normal part of aging. In the early stages of the disease, you may not notice the symptoms. COPD can develop for years without noticeable shortness of breath. You begin to see the symptoms in the more developed stages of the disease. That's why it is important that you talk to your doctor as soon as you notice any of these symptoms. Ask your doctor about taking a **spirometry** test.

### What are the signs and symptoms of COPD?

- Increased breathlessness
- Frequent coughing (with and without sputum)
- Wheezing
- Tightness in the chest

### How common is COPD?

COPD affects an estimated 30 million individuals in the U.S., and over half of them have symptoms of COPD and do not know it. Early screening can identify COPD before major loss of lung function occurs.

### What are the risk factors and common causes of COPD?

Most cases of COPD are caused by inhaling pollutants; that includes smoking (cigarettes, pipes, cigars, etc.), and second-hand smoke. Fumes, chemicals and dust found in many work environments are contributing factors for many individuals who develop COPD. Genetics can also play a role in an individual's development of COPD—even if the person has never smoked or has ever been exposed to strong lung irritants in the workplace.

### Preventing COPD

The best way to prevent COPD is to not start smoking or to quit smoking. Smoking is the leading cause of COPD. If you smoke, talk with your doctor about programs and products that can help you quit.

## CONSTRUCTION DUST



Construction dust is not just a nuisance; it can seriously damage your health and some types can eventually even kill. Regularly breathing these dusts over a long time can therefore cause life-changing lung diseases.

### There are three main types:

1. Silica dust – created when working on silica-containing materials like concrete, mortar and sandstone (also known as respirable crystalline silica or RCS)
2. Wood dust – created when working on softwood, hardwood and wood-based products like MDF and plywood;
3. Lower toxicity dusts – created when working on materials containing very little or no silica. The most common include gypsum (eg in plasterboard), limestone, marble and dolomite.

Anyone who breathes in these dusts should know the damage they can do to the lungs and airways. The main dust-related diseases affecting construction workers are: lung cancer ; silicosis; chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD); asthma.

Some lung disease, like advanced silicosis or asthma, can come on quite quickly. However, most of these diseases take a long time to develop. Dust can build up in the lungs and harm them gradually over time. The effects are often not immediately obvious. Unfortunately, by the time it is noticed the total damage done may already be serious and life changing. It may mean permanent disability and early death.

Construction workers have a high risk of developing these diseases because many common construction tasks can create high dust levels. Over 500 construction workers are believed to die from exposure to silica dust every year. The amounts needed to cause this damage are not large.

Follow the worksite Written Exposure Control Plan (WECP) and remember control the dust, use the proper equipment and always use your Respiratory protective equipment (RPE).

## WHAT DOES A WELLNESS CHAMPION DO?

- Serve as an ambassador and resource to your Local Union to help build a culture of wellness and job safety
- This year in addition to providing information on chronic conditions we are provided information on mental wellness, cancer screenings and avoiding back injuries.
- Assist in communicating Health/Safety programs at Union Meetings and on job sites
- Encourage members to participate in wellness events sponsored by the Health and Safety Fund

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Join the wellness champions at **Family Fun and Fitness Day on September 30, 2017**. For more information about Family Fun and Fitness Day go to [www.familyfunandfitnessday.com](http://www.familyfunandfitnessday.com).

Join us at the **Philadelphia Step Out Walk To Stop Diabetes November 4, 2017 @ Philadelphia Museum of Art**. Contact your local's Wellness Champion or call the Health and Safety Fund at 215-765- 2014 ext 1235 or 1236 for information.

**2017 Walk to End Alzheimer's - Philadelphia, Pa.** Take the first step to a world without Alzheimer's. **Saturday, November 11, 2017**. Contact your local's Wellness Champion or call the Health and Safety Fund at 215-765- 2014 ext 1235 or 1236 for information

## HOW CAN I GET IN TOUCH MY THE WELLNESS CHAMPION FOR MY LOCAL?

**Laborers' Local 57** - Raymond Rame Richardson @ [rame24fit@gmail.com](mailto:rame24fit@gmail.com)

**Laborers' Local 135** - Roy Brown @ [rbrown@local135.org](mailto:rbrown@local135.org)

**Laborers' Local 332** - Terrell Jenkins @ [terell25Jenkins@gmail.com](mailto:terell25Jenkins@gmail.com)

**Laborers' Local 413** - Mark Freeman @ [mfreeman@laborers413.com](mailto:mfreeman@laborers413.com)