

Better Breathing for Better Living



By Michael A. Lucia, MD, Pulmonologist
Medical Director, SPEAR pulmonary rehabilitation
at Northern Nevada Medical Center

It's as natural as breathing. Breathing is an unconscious fact of life, so automatic that we almost always take it for granted. Yet breathing is as essential as it is automatic, because our bodies depend upon oxygen to survive. During a normal day, we breathe nearly 25,000 times, inhaling large amounts of air containing mostly oxygen and nitrogen.



When a person experiences loss of lung function, the body does not get the oxygen it needs. A common cause of diminished lung function is Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), including diseases such as emphysema, chronic bronchitis and asthma. If you are one of the more than 30 million Americans living with COPD, you probably don't take breathing for granted. You know how illness affects your breathing ... and your life.

The good news is that pulmonary rehabilitation can help. Northern Nevada Medical Center this fall opened the Sierra Pulmonary Education and Rehabilitation (SPEAR) center. This eight- to 12-week outpatient pulmonary rehabilitation program is designed to give people with chronic respiratory diseases more independence and improved quality of life.

Team-Centered Treatment

SPEAR combines individualized exercise training and behavioral and educational programs with group support to help patients with COPD control symptoms and improve day-to-day activities. It uses a team approach -- patients work closely with their doctors and SPEAR healthcare professionals: nurses, psychologists, exercise specialists, dietitians, and respiratory, physical and occupational therapists.

Pulmonary rehabilitation can help people with respiratory illness:

- Reduce and control breathing difficulties and other symptoms
- Learn more about their disease, treatment options and coping strategies
- Learn to manage their disease and reduce their dependence on health professionals and costly medical resources
- Maintain healthy behaviors such as smoking cessation, good nutrition and exercise

Education

Knowing how pulmonary disease affects the body is an important foundation for learning ways to manage everyday life and improve strength and stamina. SPEAR provides education on a number of topics including anatomy and physiology, breathing techniques, medications, nutrition, stress management, relaxation

Exercise is a key component of the SPEAR program.

- Do you get short of breath after walking just a block?
- Does breathing become difficult when you bend or stoop?
- Is your breathing harder when you're anxious?
- Have you been diagnosed with a pulmonary disease such as emphysema, chronic bronchitis or asthma?
- Are you willing to participate in a medically supervised self-management program of exercise and education to improve your quality of life?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, ask your physician about a referral to Northern Nevada Medical Center's SPEAR pulmonary rehabilitation program.

techniques, energy conservation and work simplification.

Exercise

A physical reconditioning program is designed to meet each participant's specific needs and goals. The program involves the use of specialized exercise equipment located at the SPEAR office. Exercise sessions and progress are monitored and evaluated by pulmonary rehabilitation specialists. The information is shared with participants' physicians throughout the program.

Class Schedule

Participants can choose either morning or afternoon sessions on multiple weekdays for a period of eight to 12 weeks. Prior to beginning the program, an individual interview is conducted with a board certified pulmonologist to set realistic goals and ensure safe participation.

To join the pulmonary rehabilitation program, participants must be nonsmoking (smoke-free for at least three months) and have a physician referral. The program is fully covered by Medicare, and most health insurance plans cover all or part of the cost.



Board certified in pulmonology, critical care medicine and sleep disorders, Michael A. Lucia, MD, serves as medical director for Sierra Pulmonary Education and Rehabilitation (SPEAR). Clinical director Kerstin McGinnis, ASN, is a state and nationally board certified registered respiratory therapist. The program is located in Suite 200, 2345 E. Prater Way, Sparks. For more information or to arrange a pulmonary rehabilitation evaluation appointment, please call 351-2625.