

COPD Learn More Breathe Better®

Fact Sheet: 2009 Survey of COPD Awareness Among U.S. Adults

44 percent of Americans either smoke or used to smoke.

- At-risk populations for COPD and key audiences for the COPD Learn More Breathe Better campaign include former and current smokers, particularly 45 years of age or older.
 - Current smokers age 45 and older comprise 11 percent of the total population, and former smokers in this age range comprise 20 percent of American adults.

One-quarter of Americans has a connection to COPD.

- One quarter of the U.S. population--24 percent-- has an association with COPD. Specifically, 4 percent of all adults 18 and older report that they have COPD, and an additional 20 percent say they know someone with the disease.
 - One in five adults 45 and older has the disease, and 22 percent in this age range know someone who has it.
 - The proportion of Americans who have an association with COPD did not change from 2008 to 2009.
 - Current and former smokers are more likely than non-smokers to either have or know someone with COPD (29 percent of both current and former smokers vs. 21 percent of non-smokers).

Two-thirds of Americans have heard of COPD.

- More than two-thirds of Americans (68 percent) have heard of COPD, representing a slight increase from 2008 (65 percent).
 - Significant gains in awareness from 2008 to 2009 were seen among people who neither have COPD nor know someone who does (increased from 53 to 58 percent) and among current smokers (increased from 69 to 74 percent).
 - Former smokers age 45 and older are more likely than former smokers under age 45 to have heard of COPD (72 vs. 65 percent).

Most can identify at least one symptom of the disease.

- In 2009, 81 percent of adults correctly identified shortness of breath as a symptom of COPD, representing a significant increase from 2008 (74 percent).
 - Awareness of this symptom increased among those who neither have COPD nor know someone with the disease (up from 68 to 77 percent).
 - Awareness of this symptom also increased among current, former and non-smokers (75 to 83 percent, 76 to 82 percent and 74 to 80 percent, respectively).
- There was a slight overall increase in the percentage of adults who recognized chronic cough as a possible symptom of COPD (50 percent in 2008 to 53 percent in 2009).
 - Awareness of this symptom also increased among current, former and non-smokers (55 to 59 percent, 49 to 52 percent and 49 to 52 percent, respectively).

Most physicians agree that COPD is treatable, but patients are not sure.

- Nearly nine out of 10 primary care physicians (89 percent) agree or strongly agree that current treatments for COPD are helpful for optimizing a patient's quality of life.

- Overall, less than half of Americans (44 percent) agree with the statement “COPD is treatable.”
 - 46 percent of respondents appear unsure of COPD’s treatability, by neither agreeing nor disagreeing.
 - Current smokers are less likely than former or non-smokers to agree that COPD is treatable (39 vs. 49 and 43 percent respectively).
 - Current and former smokers ages 45 and older are more likely than their younger counterparts to think COPD is treatable (51 vs. 28 percent and 51 vs. 41 percent, respectively).

Many of those at-risk have symptoms, but don’t discuss them with their doctors.

- Overall, 17 percent of Americans say they have suffered from chronic cough, wheezing or shortness of breath over the past year. These are all recognizable symptoms of COPD.
 - Those who have COPD are most likely to have experienced these symptoms (76 percent).
 - In addition, current smokers are more likely than former smokers to report these symptoms (32 vs. 19 percent).
- Among the 17 percent of respondents who reported experiencing COPD symptoms over the past year, 30 percent reported that they did not talk to their doctors about these conditions.
 - Current smokers were much less likely than former smokers to say they talked to their doctors about experiencing COPD symptoms (42 vs. 78 percent).
 - In addition, among those ages 45 and older, current smokers are much less likely than former smokers to say they talked to their doctor about these conditions (58 vs. 84 percent).
- The leading reasons that Americans say they did not talk to their doctor about experiencing COPD symptoms include that it costs too much money to go to the doctor (31 percent), because they did not think of it (28 percent) and because they don’t want another quit smoking message (26 percent).
 - Not wanting another quit smoking message is the top reason among current smokers (41 percent) for not talking to their doctor about COPD symptoms. Other reasons include that it costs too much (32 percent), they did not think of it (24 percent) and they are afraid they will have a serious health problem (23 percent).

Methodology

The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute licensed data from Porter Novelli HealthStyles 2009, a consumer mail panel survey that was fielded in August 2009 among Synovate Inc.’s Consumer Opinion Panel. Stratified random sampling was used to generate a nationally representative sample of 8,000 potential respondents who received the Porter Novelli ConsumerStyles 2009 survey. In 2009, a total of 4,172 people completed the HealthStyles survey.

The margin of error for the main sample of the survey (n = 4,172) is plus or minus 1.5 percentage points. The margin of error for subgroups is larger.

The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute also licensed data from Porter Novelli DocStyles 2009, a Web-based survey. The survey was fielded in July 2009, and the items licensed by NHLBI were answered by a total of 1,000 primary care physicians.

The margin of error for the main sample of Primary Care Physicians (PCPs) in the survey (n = 1,000) is plus or minus 3.1 percentage points. The margin of error for other specialties is larger.