



For Immediate Release

“Short of Breath? Think COPD” – CTS recognizes World COPD Day 2025 by Raising Awareness of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease in Canada

November 19, 2025 - The Canadian Thoracic Society (CTS) joins the global community on November 19 in recognizing **World COPD Day**, spotlighting the [Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease](#) (GOLD theme): “Short of Breath, Think COPD.” With millions of Canadians affected by chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), the CTS emphasizes the urgent need for greater awareness, earlier diagnosis, and improved access to care.

COPD has been diagnosed in more than 2 million Canadians, with many more underdiagnosed. This progressive lung disease is marked by symptoms such as shortness of breath, chronic cough, and sputum production. It remains a leading cause of hospitalization and premature death in Canada, placing a significant emotional and financial strain on individuals, families and the healthcare system.

“COPD deeply affects not only those living with it, but also their loved ones and communities,” says Dr. Joshua Wald, respirologist and past co-chair of the CTS COPD Clinical Assembly. “The good news is that we have better tools than ever before to treat COPD. With early diagnosis, lifestyle changes, and proper treatment, patients can live longer, experience fewer hospital visits, and enjoy a better quality of life.”

On World COPD Day, the CTS extends its heartfelt appreciation to the dedicated healthcare professionals across Canada – including respirologists, family physicians, general practitioners, palliative care specialists, respiratory therapists, physiotherapists, nurses, pharmacists, rehabilitation specialists and others in respirology who provide ongoing care and compassion to those living with COPD.

“COPD care is a collaborative effort,” says Lauren Singh, physiotherapist and co-chair of the CTS COPD Clinical Assembly. “From early detection to long-term support, healthcare providers play a vital role in helping patients breathe easier and live better.”

The prevalence of COPD continues to rise, driven by an aging population and ongoing exposure to risk factors such as tobacco smoke, air pollution, and workplace irritants. Early symptoms – like breathlessness during everyday activities or a persistent cough, are often dismissed or misattributed. Between 2002 and 2017, hospital admissions for COPD in Canada increased by 69%. Underdiagnosis is a concern, particularly in women, who might be diagnosed late with more advanced disease.

COPD costs the Canadian healthcare system an estimated \$1.5 billion annually, reinforcing the importance of prevention, timely detection, and integrated care strategies.

“Managing COPD effectively requires a comprehensive approach,” notes David Gourde, nurse clinician and past co-chair of the CTS COPD Clinical Assembly. “With the right support, patients can lead active, fulfilling lives.”

Canadians living with or at risk for COPD can access a wide range of services including:

- **Primary care providers** for initial assessments, smoking cessation support, and referrals for spirometry testing

- **Respirologists** for diagnosis confirmation and specialized treatment plans
- **Pharmacists** to assist with medication management and inhaler techniques
- **Pulmonary rehabilitation programs** that improve breathing, physical endurance, and overall well-being

In alignment with GOLD's 2025 World COPD Day theme, CTS urges Canadians to take respiratory symptoms seriously and seek medical advice early.

"Many people think breathlessness is just a part of aging - but it is not," says Dr. Andrea Gershon, respirologist and co-chair of the CTS COPD Clinical Assembly. "COPD is common, but with the right care, people can stay active, independent and feel much better."

Speak to your health care provider if you experience:

- Persistent or worsening shortness of breath
- A chronic cough, with or without phlegm
- Frequent chest infections
- History of smoking or exposure to lung irritants

A simple breathing test (spirometry) can confirm COPD and guide treatment. For more information on World COPD Day, visit: [GOLD COPD](#).

About the CTS

The CTS is Canada's national specialty society for respirology that brings together specialists, researchers, educators and healthcare professionals working in respiratory, critical care, and sleep medicine. The CTS advocates lung health by enhancing the ability of healthcare professionals through leadership, collaboration, research, learning and advocacy, and providing the best respiratory practices in Canada.

About the CTS COPD Clinical Assembly

The CTS COPD Clinical Assembly brings together experts from across Canada to support in the development of evidence-based clinical practice guidelines and knowledge translation tools, position statements and standards and support with educational programs and advocacy initiatives.

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