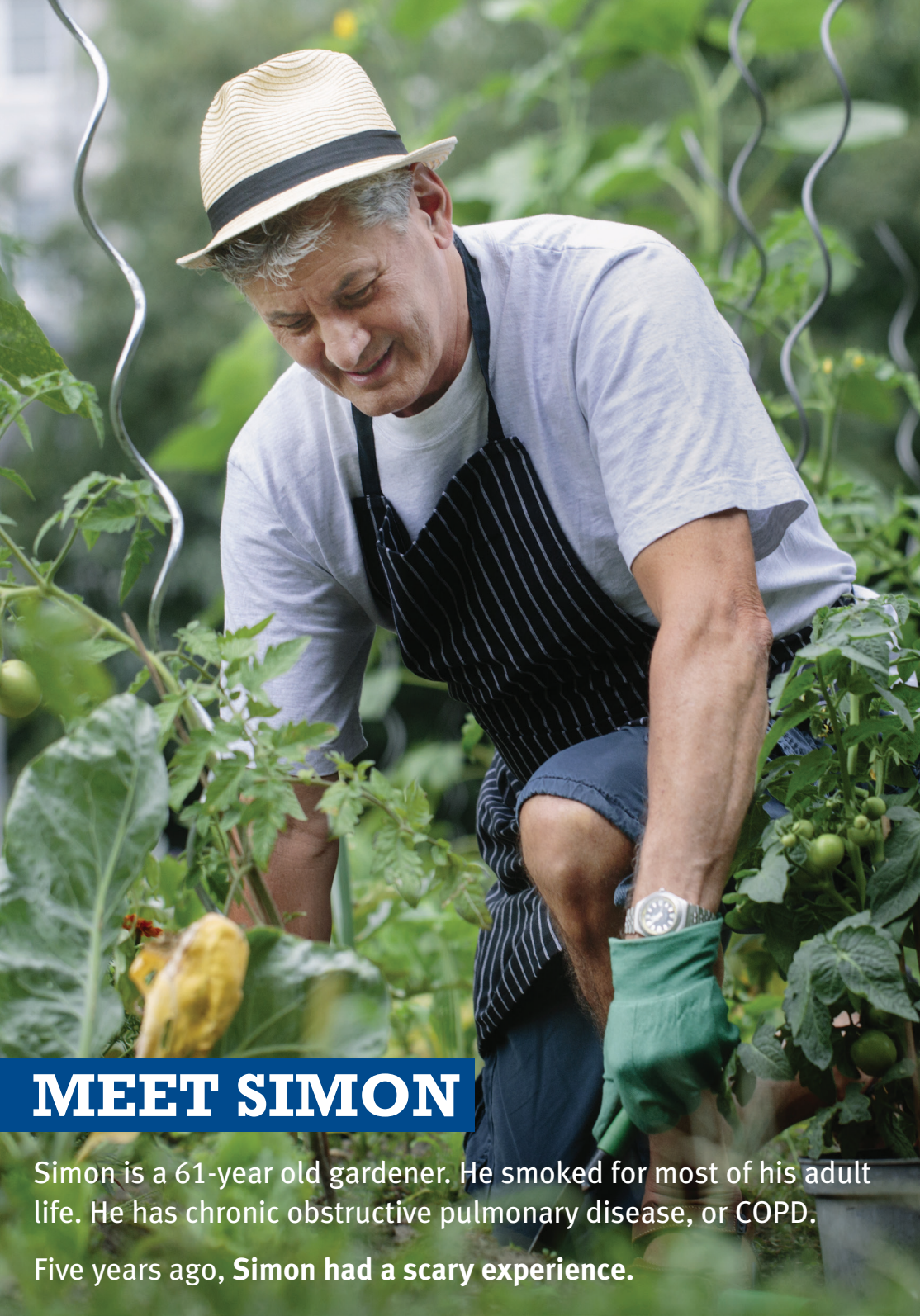


COPD EXACERBATIONS:

HOW SIMON LEARNED TO MANAGE THEM



I was walking in from my garden. All of a sudden, I couldn't breathe. I started taking my rescue inhaler, but it wasn't enough. I was so scared, I went to the emergency department. Afterward, my doctor told me I'd had a COPD exacerbation.

MEET SIMON

Simon is a 61-year old gardener. He smoked for most of his adult life. He has chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or COPD.

Five years ago, **Simon had a scary experience.**

WHAT IS A COPD EXACERBATION?

A COPD exacerbation means that your COPD symptoms suddenly get worse. Exacerbations are often caused by an infection, like a cold or a respiratory virus. Exacerbations can happen quickly, and they can be serious too. Even if your COPD doesn't seem that bad, there's still a chance that an exacerbation can cause you to visit your doctor or go to the hospital.

WHAT ARE THE WARNING SIGNS?

If you have an exacerbation, your breathing will get worse. You may also notice some other warning signs. These may include:

- Wheezing and/or coughing more than usual
- Shortness of breath that is worse than usual
- A change in the color or amount of mucus
- Faster or more shallow breathing than usual
- Feeling very tired

COPD EXACERBATIONS CAN AFFECT WELL-BEING

Simon's COPD exacerbation made him worry about his health. When he talked to his doctor, he learned some scary facts about COPD exacerbations.

If you have a COPD exacerbation,

- It may be harder to breathe in the future
- You are more likely to have another exacerbation
- You may have to go to the hospital

A photograph of a hospital corridor. On the left, there are several white doors with grey handles. A white hand sanitizer dispenser is mounted on the wall. In the center, there is a medical cart with various equipment, including a white machine and a blue bag. A window with a white curtain is at the end of the corridor. The floor is light-colored and reflective.

ONE EXACERBATION CAN LEAD TO MORE

Simon's doctor explained that a COPD exacerbation could happen again. Exacerbations could also have bad effects on Simon's life. He might have to limit his activities if he feels sick. He might have to go to the hospital. One exacerbation could have a lasting effect on Simon's breathing. Simon learned that he must take good care of himself.

Here's what really worried Simon. His doctor said that an exacerbation can still cause a visit to the hospital – even if your COPD isn't a really bad case.

**The exacerbation
felt like a dead
weight on my
chest. I didn't
want this to
happen again. So
I asked my doctor
what I could do.**

SIMON AND HIS DOCTOR MAKE A PLAN

After talking with his doctor, Simon understood what he needed to do. First, he had to quit smoking. Simon was given a medicine to take every day, even when he felt well. His doctor called it 'maintenance treatment.'

DO

- ✓ Take medicine every day, even on 'good days'
- ✓ Exercise regularly
- ✓ Keep warm in cool weather, and keep cool in warm weather
- ✓ Eat a healthy diet
- ✓ Drink plenty of water
- ✓ Get a flu shot every year
- ✓ Get pneumonia and whooping cough shots when needed

DON'T

- ✓ Continue smoking
- ✓ Hide any information. Make sure you tell your doctor how you're feeling

**I feel better now.
I know to take my
medicine every day.
I'll be sure to follow
my doctor's advice
carefully.**



Questions? Talk to your doctor.

**Together you can work out the
best plan to manage your COPD.**

**For more information about
COPD, please visit:
www.goldcopd.org/patients.html**