About Pulmonary Fibrosis

What is pulmonary fibrosis? There are more than 200 types of interstitial lung diseases (ILD), which are characterized by varied amounts of inflammation, scarring, or both, that damage the ability of the lung to absorb oxygen from the air. Pulmonary fibrosis (PF), means scarring of the lung, and can be seen in many types of ILD. Difficult to diagnose, PF and ILD can be debilitating and, in some cases, incurable. Causes of PF and ILD include the use of certain medications, radiation to the chest, autoimmune diseases, environmental, and occupational exposures. Idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, which has no known cause, is one of the most common forms of PF. The prevalence of PF and ILD is on the rise with more than 50,000 new cases diagnosed annually.

What causes pulmonary fibrosis? Some known causes of PF include autoimmune diseases, such as rheumatoid arthritis and scleroderma, environmental exposures, such as some molds or birds, and certain medications. Radiation for cancer treatments can also sometimes cause PF. However, many times PF is "idiopathic," meaning the cause is unknown.

What are common symptoms of pulmonary fibrosis? The most common symptoms of PF are a dry, persistent cough and unusual (increased for you) breathlessness with activity. Many people with PF also experience fatigue or feel constantly worn out.

How many people have pulmonary fibrosis? More than 250,000 Americans are living with PF and ILD. PF is much more common in older adults, but it can affect people of all ages.

Can PF run in the family? Yes. Anywhere from 3% to 20% of people with PF have another family member with PF. However, this does not mean that 20% of your family will develop PF. In most cases, the chance that a family member will develop PF is unclear. Anyone with further questions is encouraged to talk to their doctor or a genetic counselor about chances that a family member will develop PF.

What are some of the available treatments for pulmonary fibrosis? Treatments for PF depend on each person's diagnosis and particular situation. Some treatments include oxygen therapy, pulmonary rehabilitation, and, for some types of PF, medications. Lung transplantation (replacing one or both lungs with lungs from a deceased donor) may be an option for some people.

How can I help someone with pulmonary fibrosis? You can ask them what is most helpful. Each person with PF has a different experience. You can see examples of how other patients and caregivers live with PF at **YouTube.com/PulmonaryFibrosisFoundation.**

How can I learn more? Visit the Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation website at **pulmonaryfibrosis.org** or contact the PFF Help Center at **844.TalkPFF** (844.825.5733) or **help@pulmonaryfibrosis.org.**

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