

# Achieve

A Newsletter  
for AvMed  
Members

## ▶ YOUR HEALTHIEST LIFE WITH COPD

### How your dentist can help your lung health

AvMed Medical Director  
Joby Kolsun shares his insight on  
the importance of oral health.

**By Joby Kolsun, D.O.**

**O**ral care is often overlooked as a part of chronic disease management. But your dentist is an important part of your care team.

A growing body of research is finding links between oral health and physical health. Your mouth is home to billions of bacteria, some good and some bad. A healthy mouth can fight off bad bacteria. But when you have gum disease or another problem, you're less able to fight off those germs.

Since your mouth has a direct route to your lungs via your throat, that bad bacteria can travel into your lungs and cause infections. As a matter of fact, gum disease has been linked to a higher risk of pneumonia. Poor oral health may also increase your risk of COPD flare-ups.

If you have one or more chronic conditions, dentist visits are even more important. Regular cleanings will help keep

your teeth and gums healthy. And your dentist can check for early signs of gum disease or other problems that could make your condition worse.

#### Oral health checklist

- Brush your teeth twice a day for two minutes.
- Floss every day.
- Visit the dentist twice a year for a cleaning and exam.
- Cut back on sugary foods and drinks.



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## Strengthen your lungs with breathing exercise



**Y**our lungs are like balloons — they stretch when they fill with air and spring back when the air is released. With COPD, your lungs may not spring back all the way, leaving stale, low-oxygen air behind.

Luckily, there are two powerful breathing exercises that can help. “These techniques can help you get more oxygen into your lungs,” says Stephanie Williams, R.R.T. She’s the senior director of community education at the COPD Foundation.

You can use these exercises to relieve symptoms when

they come on. But Williams also recommends practicing breathing exercises every day. “That way, when you have shortness of breath, you know what to do,” she says.

### Pursed lip breathing

**What it does:** It helps you empty your lungs completely.

**How to do it:** Breathe in through the nose for two seconds. Then pucker your lips like you’re whistling and blow out for at least four seconds. Repeat this several times until you are able to take deeper breaths.

**When to do it:** Do this during and after exercise

or any time you feel short of breath.

### Belly breathing (or diaphragmatic breathing)

**What it does:** It strengthens your diaphragm, which is the main muscle for breathing.

**How to do it:** While lying down, place one hand on your upper chest and one hand on your stomach. Breathe in through your nose, filling your belly. Your hand on your stomach should rise as you breathe in. Breathe out slowly with pursed lips, pushing in from your belly.

**When to do it:** Practice this a couple of times each day. Belly breathing can be hard to master. The COPD Foundation recommends working on it with a respiratory or physical therapist.

## We’re here for you

Your Case Manager can connect you to the resources you need.

Just call **1-833-609-0735.**



## Healthy Eating Made Simple

Elizabeth Ferrer, R.D., AvMed’s Registered Dietitian, shares her favorite tips for happier, healthier meals — without feeling deprived.

## Stay on track this holiday season

**T**he holidays are all about enjoying friends, family ... and delicious food! But if you’re managing a health condition or have dietary restrictions, the buffet table may feel more like a minefield. Still, you can indulge in seasonal favorites without sacrificing your health. Here are a few tips.

### Avoid mindless grazing

People tend to gather around the food at parties. But when you’re chatting, you may not even realize how much you’re eating. Cut down on mindless eating by moving conversations away from the snacks.

### Be smart about sweets

Sweets aren’t off the table,

but be mindful of how much you have. If there are several things you want to try, have just one or two bites of a few



different things (maybe find a friend to split portions with). Or, if you have your eye on something special, have a whole portion of just that.

### Bring your own dish

If you have specific dietary restrictions, bring your own dish that meets your

needs. The host and the rest of the party will appreciate an extra dish, and you know there will be at least one thing there that you can eat without worry. (Looking for ideas? Try the recipe on the next page. It’s a lighter version of a sweet potato casserole.)

### Go easy on the drinks

Alcoholic (or non-alcoholic) drinks can be loaded with calories and sugar, on top of all the other treats

you’re enjoying. Choose low-calorie options like light beer or wine or use sugar-free mixers like seltzer or diet soda. And stick to just one or two drinks.

### Don’t come hungry

It’s tempting to “save your calories” by skipping meals or eating light before going to a party. But if you’re overly hungry when you get to the party, you’re more likely to overeat. And it will be harder to resist cravings for salt, sugar, and fat.

## Recipe



### Roasted Sweet Potato with cinnamon almond butter sauce

Serves: 4 | Prep time: 10 minutes  
Cook time: 30 minutes

#### Ingredients

2 large sweet potatoes, cut into small cubes  
2 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil  
½ tsp. garlic powder  
¼ tsp. salt  
2 Tbsp. natural creamy almond butter  
1 Tbsp. warm water  
1 tsp. cinnamon powder

#### Nutrition facts (per serving):

Calories: 190 calories | Fat: 11 g (saturated fat: 1 g) |  
Cholesterol: 0 mg | Sodium: 180 mg | Carbs: 20 g | Fiber: 4 g |  
Sugar: 6 g (added sugar: 0 g) | Protein: 4 g

#### Directions

Preheat oven to 425° F.  
Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Add the sweet potatoes and toss with olive oil, garlic powder, and salt. Bake for 15 minutes, stir, and return to the oven for 15 minutes.

While the potatoes are roasting, make the sauce: Add the almond butter and water to a small bowl and microwave for 10-15 seconds. Mix in the cinnamon powder. If needed, add more warm water a teaspoon at a time until it's thin enough to drizzle. Drizzle sauce over roasted sweet potatoes and serve.