**COPD Support Ireland call on the country to join the conversation and #LetstalkCOPD**

**Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) World Awareness Week (13th to 17th November)**

* **Nationwide events planned for World COPD Day on the 15th of November**

COPD Support Ireland, a national charity for all those living with the disease, is delighted to announce a week of events to help raise awareness and encourage people to start a conversation about the illness.

#LetstalkCOPD is about getting the nation talking and telling their stories about their experiences with COPD. Some will have the respiratory condition, some will care for family and friends who suffer from COPD, while others join in the narrative for the first time this November.

We want people to hear about a condition that affects around 380,000 people in Ireland, with an estimated 120,000 more undiagnosed.

The COPD facts are:

* It is the fourth most common cause of death in Ireland after lung cancer, heart disease and stroke;
* Those most at risk are current or former smokers over the age of 40;
* Symptoms include a chronic cough, breathlessness, pressure on the chest and a wheeze.

By joining the conversation, people can learn:

* That the condition can be managed better with an early diagnosis;
* That exercise really helps with living with the condition even if it’s just one short walk each day;
* That talking about the condition will help people realise there is strong community of support nationwide;
* And that COPD Support Ireland is there to help those with the condition across all social media platforms and through our dedicated advice line.

And significantly:

* 10% of people with COPD have NEVER smoked;
* 30% of people with the condition have successfully quit smoking;
* Ireland has the highest rate of COPD admissions to hospitals in the EU and 60% more admissions than the UK;
* Pulmonary rehabilitation is one of the most effective treatment methods yet the health system only has a capacity to cater for 10% of COPD patients.

Bernie Murphy, CEO of COPD Support Ireland, said the focus of the charity’s week-long awareness campaign is to encourage dialogue on a condition that is widespread in Ireland.

“We want to use World COPD Week to bring attention to this illness and keep it there,” she said. “COPD is often overlooked in the national health agenda because lung disease is not the most comfortable topic to discuss. However, we cannot ignore the large numbers of people in Ireland who have this condition and deserve to be looked after, informed and helped to manage the illness the best way they can.

“I want to encourage all of us to start a conversation about COPD. Let’s get the nation informed about the condition. Let’s all learn how to help those who have COPD. Let’s encourage people to get themselves checked for the illness as early diagnosis makes the condition far more manageable in the long term. In short, let’s get the nation talking, #letstalkCOPD.”

**#LetstalkCOPD Awareness Week runs from November 13th the 17th with events nationwide (from 10.30am -4.30pm) to include: free lung tests (and Spirometry tests); nutritional advice; pharmaceutical care; massage; mental health advice; and a community meet and greet.**

* Monday 13th – Galway city (Westwood Hotel)
* Tuesday 14th – Athlone (Radisson Hotel)
* Wednesday 15th (World COPD Day) – Dublin city (Wynn’s Hotel)
* Thursday 16th – Cavan (Kilmore Hotel)
* Friday 17th – Cork city (Ambassador Hotel)

**About World COPD Day**

World COPD is an annual awareness-raising event organised and sponsored by the Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease (GOLD).

COPD Support Ireland has developed an awareness week in tandem with World COPD Day. Join the conversation at: [www.copd.ie](http://www.copd.ie)

Facebook: @COPDSupportIreland Twitter: @COPDSupportIre

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