

Lung Problems Persist for 9/11 Disaster

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NEW YORK, Feb. 5 -- Long after the towers of the World Trade Center went down in flames, workers there and first responders still suffer from decreased lung function, researchers here said.

Nearly a quarter of workers in a longitudinal study still had spirometric abnormalities at least 18 months after an initial examination, Gwen S. Skloot, M.D., of Mount Sinai, and colleagues reported in the February issue of *CHEST*.

"The increased prevalence of abnormal spirometry in follow-up examinations as long as five years after the Sept. 11 attacks makes long-term monitoring of World Trade Center responders essential," the researchers said.

Earlier studies found an initial high prevalence of decreased lung function after exposure, but this was the first study to look at post-Sept. 11 lung function changes over time.

Action Points:

- Explain to interested patients that early studies found an initial high prevalence of decreased lung function in relief workers after exposure, but this study found problems remained nearly five years later in some cases.
- Note that the most common problem was low forced vital capacity, although declines in lung function were not greater than had been expected.

The most common problem was a low forced vital capacity (FVC), but the researchers said that overall, declines in lung function were not greater than had been expected.

The researchers followed 3,160 patients enrolled in the WTC Worker and Volunteer Medical Monitoring Program, which began in July 2002.

Each patient had a baseline and a follow-up examination