



## With the right medical team, Gail S. is prepared to win

Four years post-diagnosis, she feels like she already has

I was enrolled in film classes when I started coughing a lot.

Previously an elementary school teacher, I was planning to make educational films. I was very excited about my career change.

My internist kept telling me that I had allergies or asthma. Then he told me that he thought I might have sleep apnea. He sent me to a university medical center, where I had some tests done, and several months later I had a biopsy that confirmed the diagnosis of IPF. That was four years ago in June.

When I first heard the diagnosis, I just kind of sat there and thought, "But I wanted to do these films. I wanted to go to Africa. I wanted to see my sons get married." Then I realized that this kind of thinking was putting me in a bad place. I decided I had to make some new hopes and dreams. I resolved to find out everything I could about IPF and to do everything I could to fight it.

Finding a medical team that felt like a partnership was really important. I looked for a doctor who would look at me and say, "Yes, this is a fatal disease, but I am going to do everything I can to help you." Some of the doctors I saw early on did not

seem to care for me asking as many questions as I did. Now I go in with my list and my doctor answers everything. He tells it like it is, and that's important. I have to know the truth if I'm going to succeed.

It also helps a lot that I can call my nurse anytime. She does so much for me. She will take care of anything, whether it's simply making an appointment or something more complicated like paperwork to get oxygen on an airplane.

I am Irish, and I guess we just don't give up. A key to this for me—or anyone with this disease—is to accept and own the illness. I may not get that miracle cure, but I will never say it is impossible.

For a while, any energy I had went into dealing with this illness—but now I'm starting work on my educational films again. There are two that I really want to finish, and I am ready to, now. I think that they will be really good.

I hear some people in support groups who feel like they can't win. I tell them that maybe we just have to adjust our idea of what winning is. Maybe we can't have this disease be gone totally, but we can fight it and keep going. I tell them that, to me, winning is staying here longer. If you look at it that way, I've already won.

Your doctor may recommend that you receive any of several different tests that measure how well your lungs are functioning. One important test is HRCT—high-resolution computed tomography.

### An HRCT scan:

- Is similar to an x-ray or CT (CAT) scan, but provides more exact pictures of your lungs
- May be performed to identify the amount and pattern of scarring in your lungs
- Can help to confirm a diagnosis of IPF



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DEDICATED TO IPF  
PATIENTS AND  
CAREGIVERS

## ONE BREATH AT A TIME

### Your pulmonary rehabilitation program

Even if there is not a formal pulmonary rehabilitation program in your community, there are steps you can take to maintain or improve your lung function and overall health. **Talk to your doctor about these tips from pulmonary experts:**

- If you smoke, make a serious effort to quit
- Avoid airborne irritants like second-hand smoke, exhaust, and mold
- Exercise within your abilities three to five days each week
  - Walking is one activity that works for many people with lung problems
- Start slowly: Even five or ten minutes of walking will provide benefits if you do it regularly
- Eat well: Good nutrition gives you energy and helps you resist infections
- Improve function: Simple stretches and upper-body exercise can help



## NETWORK EXCHANGE

### Prepared to Fight IPF Together

Peggy D.'s love and joy is her new husband, who was recently diagnosed with IPF. With her own health issues due to recent surgery, she knows what it is to go through things. Peggy relies on meditation, prayer, and the support of others to get her through. The most important thing that gives her and her husband strength: her positive outlook. She tells her husband, "We're going to celebrate our 25th wedding anniversary. We're doing that." **Peggy's advice for patients and families:**

- Eat well, get enough rest, and avoid stress
- Plan ahead; make life easier when possible
- Avoid areas with airborne irritants like smoke, perfume, or potpourri
- Watch movies that make you laugh
- Steer away from "complainers"
- Do not dwell on your illness; "think positive"
- Tell those you care about that you love them