

**COPD Action Plan** (to be completed with your doctor)

**Green Zone**

**When you feel fine, know:**

- How much you can do each day.
- How your breathing is — at rest and when active.
- How well you are sleeping.
- How much mucus you have. Also know the color of it.

**Lifestyle tips:**

- Stop smoking. Stay away from smoky places.
- Exercise — as much as your doctor says is OK.
- Eat foods that are good for you.
- Never run out of your medicines.

Medicine	Dose	How Often

TAKE

**Yellow Zone**

**Signs that symptoms are worse:**

- Hard to breathe. Maybe more wheezing, too.
- Coughing up more mucus (thick fluid). Mucus is a different color.
- Fever.
- Need to use inhaler or nebulizer more.
- Not feeling hungry.
- Coughing more than normal.

**What to do:**

- Call your doctor about your symptoms.
- See your doctor if you think you may have an infection.
- If your doctor says take more medicine, do so.
- Ask your doctor if you should drink extra fluid.
- Not feeling hungry. Eat small amounts more often.

Medicine	Dose	How Often

ADD

**Red Zone**

**Emergency Symptoms:**

- Very short of breath
- Feeling agitated or fearful
- Feeling drowsy or confused
- Chest pains
- High fever

**Contact Your Doctor**  
 Doctor's Name:  
 Doctor's Telephone Number:  
**And call 911.**

Medicine	Dose	How Often

ADD

**CALL YOUR DOCTOR NOW! Call 911 or have someone take you to the ER.**

**Sources**

1. American Lung Association: [www.lungusa.org](http://www.lungusa.org); Canadian Lung Association: [www.lung.ca](http://www.lung.ca).
2. Wood-Baker RR, Gibson PG, Hannay M, Walters EH, Walters JAE. Systemic Corticosteroids for Acute Exacerbations of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*. 1998, Issue 4.
3. McGlynn, et al. The Quality of Health Care Delivered to Adults in the United States. *New England Journal of Medicine*. June 26, 2003 (348: 2635-45).

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**Taking Charge of Your COPD**



Be prepared for your next doctor visit. Bring a list of questions.

These can get you started. Add your own to this list:

- Am I taking the right medicine for my COPD?
- Am I using my inhaler the right way? Should I use a spacer?
- How do I avoid my triggers or things that make my breathing worse?
- What do I do when my COPD gets worse?
- How do I take care of a respiratory infection?
- Are there any tips that can help me breathe easier when it gets hard?
- How much should I exercise each day? What exercises are best?
- What's the best way to quit smoking?

### NOTES:

- **Keep your body moving.** Exercise is important for healthy lungs. Want to start exercising? Talk to your doctor first. Want to exercise more than you have been? Ask your doctor if it's OK.
- **Get enough sleep.** It's so important. You'll feel stronger when you're rested.

### Remember — mind and body work together:

- **Learn to manage stress.** Take slow, deep breaths. Try to clear your mind. Think about peaceful scenes. Talk with understanding loved ones.
- **Watch for signs of depression.** Having COPD can be hard at times. Be aware of your feelings. Do you think you may be depressed? Or are you struggling with your feelings? If so, tell your doctor about it. He or she can help.

### Be smoke-free:

- **Quit smoking.** Don't put it off another day. There are some things that can help you quit. Ask your doctor about medicines and other products. He or she will tell you if they're right for you.
- **Get help to quit.** 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) or visit <http://1800quitnow.cancer.gov> for more information.
- **Watch out for other people's smoke, too.** That's called secondhand smoke. It's also bad for your lungs.

### Take charge with the basics:

- **Eat good foods.** Fuel up with the right foods. Your doctor can tell you about smart choices. He or she also can tell you how much is right for you.



**Take charge of your health. Learn as much as you can.  
It's one of the most important things you can do for yourself.**

## **COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease)**

is a group of lung diseases. They make it hard to breathe. These are the most common:

- Emphysema — The air sacs are damaged. It's hard to push out old air and breathe in fresh air.
- Chronic bronchitis — The airways are swollen and clogged with mucus (thick fluid). It's hard for air to pass through the lungs.

## **Take charge**

Welcome to Taking Charge of Your COPD. If you have COPD, you may have questions. What medicines treat it? What can I do to stay as healthy as possible? What is a COPD action plan? Why do I need one?

Don't let these questions worry you. We can help you learn about COPD. And, that can help you take charge of your health.

### **This guide can help you:**

- Learn more about medicines that can help COPD.
- Understand what makes your COPD worse.
- Know when to take action if it does get worse.
- Learn how to do “pursed lip” breathing. Also, learn how it can help.
- Know what questions to ask your doctor.

**Don't miss the back of this booklet. Tear out the COPD Action Plan. Bring it with you to your next doctor visit. Fill it out with your doctor's help. A good plan can help you control your COPD.**



## COPD medicines

If you have COPD, your doctor may tell you to take one or more medicines. It's important to know what they are and what they do.

### Bronchodilators

These medicines relax the muscles around the airways in the lungs. That helps you breathe easier. There are two types:

- Long-acting bronchodilators. Take these every day. Do so even if you don't have symptoms.
- Short-acting bronchodilators. Use these when you have problems breathing. They can quickly relax and open the airways in your lungs.

### Inhaled Steroids

COPD makes airways swell up. These medicines help bring the swelling down.

**Note:** inhaled steroids are different from pill steroids. Pill steroids are generally recommended only for short-term usage in COPD treatment.

### Antibiotics

They are medicines that fight infections caused by bacteria, a type of germ.

**Help your medicines work. Take them just as your doctor tells you to. Don't change the amount you take. Don't stop taking them. Talk to your doctor if you have concerns and only make changes when your doctor says to.**

## About inhalers

An inhaler might seem easy to use. But, you need to use it the right way for it to work. Be sure to bring your inhaler to your next doctor visit. He or she can check to see if you are using it right.

How to use a metered dose inhaler (MDI):

1. Take off the cap. Shake the inhaler.
2. Breathe out slowly.
3. Hold the inhaler the way your doctor showed you. It should be slightly away from your mouth — a space about two fingers wide.
4. Slowly breathe in through your mouth at the same time you press down on the inhaler. Keep breathing in for 3 to 5 seconds.
5. Now hold your breath for 5 to 10 seconds. Then breathe out slowly.
6. Do this again as ordered by your doctor. Wait at least 1 minute between puffs.

### Read these tips!

Some people can't breathe in deeply. So, an inhaler might be hard to use. These tools can help:

- Spacer — this is attached to an inhaler. It can help get the medicine down into the lungs, instead of only going into the mouth.
- Nebulizer — this is also called a breathing machine. It creates a mist of medicine. You inhale the mist for 5 to 10 minutes.



## Your primary doctor

Do you have a primary doctor? This is a doctor you see for all of your health concerns. If you don't have one, you should get one. You can choose a doctor that's in your health plan's network. Need help finding one? Look at the back of your health plan member ID card. Call the Customer Service number. They can help you find one.

A primary doctor can help you manage your COPD. But, you need to work as a team. Tell your doctor about how you're feeling. Listen carefully, and ask questions.

The more you work together, the better your doctor will be able to treat your COPD.



### What kind of doctor should I see?

- Primary care doctor. You see this doctor for all types of health concerns. He or she often manages COPD, too.
- Lung doctor (pulmonologist). This is a specialist. You may be referred to this type of doctor, if needed. That will depend on how your COPD is doing.

Be sure to check your benefit plan for specific coverage details.

## Working well with your doctor

Consider these tips to make the most of your doctor visit. Together, you can help manage your COPD.

- 1 Bring a list of everything you take:
  - Prescription medicines
  - Over-the-counter medicines
  - Supplements or herbs
  - Vitamins

- 2 Bring your COPD Action Plan. Talk about any changes that might be needed. Make sure your Action Plan is right for you.

- 3 Bring a list of all your questions for the doctor. Not sure what to ask? Look at the list on the last page of this booklet. It will help you get started.

- 4 Be sure your doctor:
  - Helps you take steps to stay healthy
  - Has a plan to treat your COPD
  - Makes time for your questions
  - Listens to you

## Triggers

Triggers are the things that make your COPD get worse. They put stress on your lungs and make it harder to breathe.

Which triggers make your COPD worse? Here are some that lots of people have:

- **Smoke.** Don't smoke. Stay away from other people's smoke.
- **Smog.** Check air quality reports for the day. Stay indoors if the air is bad.
- **Strong smells.** They can irritate the lungs. Watch out for room fresheners, insect sprays, perfumes and hair spray.
- **Dust and fine powders.** Cleaning house? Use a wet mop or cloth to keep dust from flying. Working in the garden? Wear a face mask.
- **Very cold, hot or humid weather.** Stay indoors, if possible. Put a scarf over your nose and mouth when it's cold.
- **Respiratory infection.** Want tips on avoiding one? See Page 12 in this booklet.
- **Other triggers that affect me:** \_\_\_\_\_

**You can't avoid your triggers all the time.** A trigger might pop up suddenly. Do your best to move away from it. Use your rescue inhaler the way your doctor tells you to. Have you tried "pursed-lip breathing"? This can help.

## Pursed lip breathing

Pursed lip breathing is a way of getting control of your breath. It's easy to do. It uses less energy. And, it helps you relax.

You'll be able to let go of air that's trapped in your lungs. Then, you can let fresh air in.

Take one simple step at a time:

1. Relax your neck and shoulders.
2. Slowly breathe in through your nose. Keep your lips closed. Count to 2 or 3.
3. Pucker your lips as if you were going to whistle. Slowly breathe out. Count to 5 or 6.

It should take you twice as long to breathe out as it did to breathe in.



## Stay healthy and avoid risks

Manage your COPD every day with basic healthy habits. And, watch out for colds and flu. With COPD, you may be more likely to get a lung infection. These tips can help:

### Team up with your doctor:

- **Don't miss doctor visits.** Follow your doctor's orders about how often you need to be seen.
- **Take your medicines.** Talk with your doctor about how to take your medicine the right way. Follow directions carefully.
- **Use your action plan.** Talk with your doctor about it at each visit. Make sure it really works for you.

### Avoid routine sickness:

- **Protect against flu and pneumonia.** Ask your doctor if a flu shot is right for you. They're given once every year, starting in the fall. Also, ask your doctor about a pneumonia shot. You may need both types. Those you live with should get the shots they need, too.
- **Take care.** Try to stay away from anyone who has a cold or the flu. Stay away from crowds during cold and flu season.