

# Your COPD flare-up plan



People living with COPD will have day-to-day changes in their symptoms. You will be more breathless or cough more on some days than others. But if you notice your symptoms stay worse for two days or more, this a flare-up.

## Signs of a flare up

You may notice:

- you feel more breathless than usual
- you cough more
- you produce more sputum
- a change in the colour and thickness of your sputum

A flare-up might be triggered by an infection or the weather, or there may be no apparent cause.

## Have a flare-up action plan

You should have an action plan you've agreed with your health care professional so you know what to do. Your plan may include a rescue pack of drugs (antibiotics and steroid tablets) that you keep at home.

Make sure you know when:

- you should start to take antibiotics. This will usually be if you notice that as well as being more breathless, you're producing more sputum than usual or it has changed colour
- you should start to take a short course of steroid tablets – usually five days
- to make changes to how you take your inhaled medicine

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## your action plan

### Part 1

 Discuss and agree your action plan with your health care professional

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

GP: \_\_\_\_\_

GP phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Other doctor/nurse: \_\_\_\_\_

Next of kin: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to you: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

My symptoms	I will...
My symptoms are normal for me	<b>I will</b> continue to take my usual medication as prescribed.
I am more breathless than normal but I have no fever, and there is no change in the colour and amount of my sputum.	<b>I will</b> use my reliever medication.  This is: ..... .....
I am much more breathless despite taking my reliever medication.	<b>I will</b> continue to use my medication as prescribed and I will also use my rescue pack.  <b>Steroid:</b> ..... <b>I will</b> tell my GP or health care professional within two days of starting this treatment, and arrange a review as soon as I can.
I am more breathless than normal and coughing up more sputum, or my sputum has changed colour.	<b>I will</b> continue to use my medication as prescribed and I will also use my rescue pack.  <b>Steroid:</b> ..... <b>Antibiotic:</b> .....
I am much more breathless despite taking my reliever medication.	<b>I will</b> tell my GP or health care professional within two days of starting this treatment, and arrange a review as soon as I can.
My breathing is much worse than normal despite treatment.  I have chest pain or high fever.	<b>I will</b> call my GP as soon as my symptoms become this bad. If I can't call myself, I will ask someone to call for me.  <b>If I cannot wait to see my doctor, I will call 999 straight away. If I am too breathless, I will ask someone to call for me.</b>

## Do I feel worse than usual?

Symptoms may include:



Getting more out of breath



Getting more out of breath despite taking my reliever medication



Increased sputum. Change in colour: dark yellow, green



Increased chesty cough



Continue or increase my inhaler or nebuliser treatment



Start my rescue pack drugs (steroids)



Start my rescue pack drugs (steroids and antibiotics)



Keep calm and do my breathing exercises

## I must remember...

Contact my nurse or doctor or the community respiratory team



**If symptoms are severe, call 999**



### Remember

If you use your rescue pack drugs, tell your doctor or nurse as soon as you can so that you can replace them.



## for managing a flare-up

- Eat healthy foods little and often, rather than having big meals.
- Use controlled breathing techniques.
- If you produce more sputum than usual, try using chest clearing techniques to get rid of it.
- Try some techniques to help you to relax and relieve anxiety.
- Drink plenty of fluid – little and often is best.
- Change your plans to give yourself more time and pace yourself – plan in times to have a rest!

### Remember:

- If you cough up blood during a flare-up – or when you feel well – contact your GP as soon as you can.
- Let your health care professional know when you begin taking medication for a flare-up, so that you can get more rescue medication.
- If you have more than two flare-ups a year that require your rescue drugs, get a review with your GP or nurse.

## Part 2

Use this section to record the details of a flare-up. This can be useful to look back on with your health care professional.

I noticed my symptoms changed on: \_\_\_\_\_

*(Day and date if known)*

I started my rescue pack medication on: \_\_\_\_\_

*(Day and date if known)*

Antibiotics I took: \_\_\_\_\_

*(Dose, how often)*

Steroids I took: \_\_\_\_\_

*(Dose, how often)*

Extra reliever inhaler I took: \_\_\_\_\_

*(Dose, how often, when I started taking it)*

I called my GP or health care professional on: \_\_\_\_\_

Advice I was given: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



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