

# COPD Rescue Plan

## Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease



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When you live with COPD, your symptoms can change quickly and flare-ups can happen with little warning. Having a rescue plan gives you clear, step-by-step directions on what to do when your breathing suddenly gets worse.

Learn to notice early warning signs, use your medicines the right way, and know when it's time to get medical help.

### Dealing with flare-ups

A flare-up or exacerbation is a worsening of the signs of your lung disease. You need to know when your signs change to get the help you need as soon as you can. We are giving you this information and an action plan to help you manage your changing signs early to try to prevent you from going to the hospital to get your signs under control.

#### Changes to watch for

Learn how you feel on a bad day and how you feel when you are having a flare-up. Changes in the weather, altitude, emotions, or allergies, or forgetting to use your inhaler can cause you to have a bad day. You may cough more, feel more shortness of breath or have more mucus on a bad day.

#### The most common signs of a flare-up include:

- More problems breathing, even when you are resting
- More wheezing or chest tightness
- New or worse coughing
- More mucus or the mucus looks different
  - Mucus may be more sticky or thicker than usual. It may go from clear to yellow or green, or you may see blood in it.

#### Other changes you might have include:

- Swelling in your hands or feet
- Feeling sleepy, more tired or like you have no energy
- Being irritable, anxious, confused, forgetting things, or having trouble talking
- Faster heart rate
- Fever

Learn what signs you have when you have a flare-up. Also teach your family and friends about your signs of a flare-up. Sometimes your family and friends will notice changes in you before you notice them.

**Talk to your doctor or nurse to review your COPD action plan to deal with any flare-ups.**

## Your rescue medicines

You are being given prescriptions for rescue medicines to use at home, based on your signs of a flare-up. These medicines help ease the flare-up and give you time to work with your doctor or nurse to make any needed changes in your other medicines or treatments.

Your rescue medicines may include short-acting rescue inhaler and prednisone.

### Short-acting rescue inhaler

- **Albuterol**, sold under brand names such as ProAir, Proventil, or Ventolin, is a bronchodilator. It helps to relax the airways to allow air to move in and out so you are able to breathe easier.
- This medicine comes in an inhaler and it should be used with a spacer. If you do not have a spacer, ask for a prescription to get one.
- Possible side effects of this medicine include:
  - Feeling nervous or shaky
  - Cough or sore throat
  - Headache
  - Runny or stuffy nose
  - Dry mouth or throat
  - Problems sleeping
- Your doctor or nurse will talk to you about how many puffs you should use and how often.
- They can also teach you how to use your inhaler and the spacer.

### Prednisone

- This medicine is a corticosteroid that helps to block and decrease inflammation.
- Possible side effects of this medicine include:
  - Nausea or upset stomach
  - High blood pressure
  - High blood sugar
  - Swelling
  - Mood swings
  - Problems sleeping
  - Blurry vision, cataracts, or glaucoma
  - Weakening of the bones
  - Infections
  - Slow wound healing

- **Call your provider** if you have any of these effects:
  - Skin rash
  - Bruising or other skin changes
  - Blurred vision
  - Swelling of your feet or legs
  - Weight gain of 2 pounds or more in 24 hours
  - Severe stomach pain
  - Bloody vomit or blood in stools
  - Increased thirst or urination
- Take your medicine as directed.
- If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember. Do not take 2 doses at the same time.
- Do not crush, cut, or chew the tablets.
- **The dose as a rescue medicine is 40 mg each day for 5 days.**
- **Call your doctor or nurse if you start taking this medicine.**

## How to reduce flare-ups

### Follow these tips:

- Wash your hands often, especially after you use the bathroom, before you eat, or handle any food and after you sneeze or cough. Use soap and water to scrub for at least 15 seconds. Rinse with clean water and dry your hands with a clean towel.
- Use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid people who have colds or any other infections.
- Get the flu vaccine each year. Talk with your doctor about also having a pneumonia vaccine.
- Take your medicines as ordered by your doctor to keep your lungs working as well as they can.

## Your COPD action plan

To help you manage changes to your signs, use the COPD Action Plan on the next page to know what you should do to manage your signs and when to seek help.

Your action plan is broken into 3 sections:

- Green zone: I'm doing well.
- Yellow zone: I feel worse.
- Red zone: I feel I am in danger.

Your doctor or nurse will review the plan with you. Ask questions if there is anything you do not understand about your COPD, your action plan, or your medicines.

Be sure you review your action plan often and have it available so you and your family or friends can review it easily.

## COPD action plan

Doctor: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

| How are you doing?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Action to take                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>I'm doing well.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Breathing without shortness of breath.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Able to do daily activities.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mucus is easy to cough up.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Able to exercise as my healthcare provider directed.</li> </ul>                                                                                             | <p><b>Action:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue my current medicines.</li> <li>• Be active.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <p><b>I feel worse due to my COPD.</b><br/><b>I have:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Shortness of breath.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Problems doing daily activities.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> More coughing or wheezing.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mucus that is thicker or discolored.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Fever.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Less appetite.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Action:</b></p> <p>Continue my current medicines.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add rescue medicines, rest, and stay indoors:</li> <li>• If 1 sign is worse, take my albuterol rescue inhaler ___ puffs every ___ hours.</li> <li>• If 2 or more signs are worse for over 24 hours, take my rescue inhaler, and add <b>Prednisone, 40 mg each morning for 5 days.</b></li> <li>• Call my doctor or nurse to report changes in signs and ask for further instructions.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>I feel I am in danger.</b><br/><b>I have one or more of these signs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I feel like I can't breathe! I have severe shortness of breath.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Not able to do daily activities.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Chest pain.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Confused, slurred speech.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Feel faint.</li> </ul>       | <p><b>Action:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Take rescue medicines and call 911 or emergency medical services now!</b></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

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