

What is COPD?

COPD is a chronic disease that slowly damages your lungs and makes your breathing difficult. There is no cure but you can manage your COPD in many ways.

How do I stay healthy?

- Take your medications properly.
- Get a pneumonia shot.
- Eat well.
- Wash your hands regularly to prevent infection.
- Quit smoking (very important).
- Get an annual flu shot each fall.
- Exercise regularly.
- Follow your COPD action plan (see reverse side).

What is a flare-up?

A flare-up is what happens when your COPD starts getting worse. You may have one or more of these signs for 48 hours or longer:

- More shortness of breath than usual.
- More coughing.
- More sputum than usual.
- Your sputum colour is different.

What causes a flare-up?

- Stress or infections.
- Air pollution, dust or other allergens.
- Weather changes (cold, hot or humid air).
- Smoke.
- Strong fumes or odours.

What should I do if I start to have a flare-up?

- **Manage your flare-up as early as possible (see reverse side).**
- **Contact your doctor or nurse practitioner if your symptoms do not improve after 48 hours.**

Need more information?

Get the information and support you need from a Breathworks COPD educator:

- 1-866-717-2673 or www.lung.ca/breathworks

If you are still smoking and would like help to stop, call the Smoker's Helpline:

- 1-877-513-5333 or www.smokershelpline.ca

COPD Signs and Symptoms

Action Plan

I feel well

- My breathing problems have not changed (normal shortness of breath, cough and sputum).
- My appetite is normal.
- I have no trouble sleeping.
- I can exercise and do my daily activities as usual.

What should I do?

- Take my medications as prescribed.
- Use oxygen as prescribed.
- Continue my regular exercise and diet.
- Avoid cigarette smoke, dust and other allergens.

I feel different

- I am more short of breath than usual.
- I am coughing or wheezing more than usual.
- I have more sputum than usual.
- I feel stressed or have been around things that make my breathing worse.

What should I do?

- Take my medications, especially my quick relief, rescue or blue inhaler (Ventolin) as prescribed.
- Use oxygen as prescribed.
- Avoid things that make my breathing worse such as cigarette smoke, dust and stress.
- Breathe from my diaphragm or with pursed-lips.
- When sitting, lean forward, relax my neck, shoulders and arms.

I feel I am getting worse

- I have increased shortness of breath.
- I have increased sputum.
- I have green or yellow sputum with or without fever.

What should I do?

- Call my doctor or nurse practitioner.
- Take my medications, especially my quick relief, rescue or blue inhaler (Ventolin) as prescribed.
- Use oxygen as prescribed.
- If there is no improvement after 48 hours, call my doctor or nurse practitioner again.
- If I cannot contact my doctor or nurse practitioner, go to a clinic, urgent care or hospital.

I am in danger

- I am extremely short of breath.
- I cannot do any activity because of breathing.
- I am not able to sleep because of breathing.
- I have fever or I am shaking (chills).
- I feel confused, drowsy or anxious.
- I have sudden chest pain.

What should I do?

- **Go to the Emergency Department.**
- Take my medications, especially my quick relief, rescue or blue inhaler (Ventolin) as prescribed.
- Use oxygen as prescribed.