

Living with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

What Should I Know About COPD?



COPD is a type of lung disease that gets worse over time. People with COPD feel short of breath doing activities that normally would be easy to do. COPD cannot be cured. You will be able to manage your COPD and breathe better with the right treatment.

COPD is usually caused by inhaling pollutants, such as tobacco smoking and second-hand smoke. In the United States, smoking is the number 1 cause of COPD.

Symptoms of COPD can include any of the following:

- Shortness of breath with or without activity
- Frequent coughing and sputum (mucus) production
- Wheezing
- Tightness in chest

Treating COPD Can

- Make it easier to do normal daily activities
- Reduce symptoms
- Help keep you out of the hospital

COPD Can Be Managed By

- Not smoking
- Other lifestyle changes
- Medicines/Inhalers

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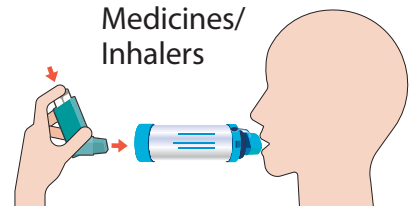
Stop
Smoking

START
YOUR
WAY



Other
Lifestyle
Changes

Medicines/
Inhalers

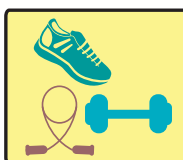


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Stop Smoking

- COPD symptoms get worse over time. The best way to slow this down is to quit smoking.
 - This includes cigarettes, pipes, cigars, and marijuana.
 - Vaping and electronic cigarettes may also make COPD symptoms worse.
- Ask your healthcare team about medicines to help you quit smoking. Combining medicine with support programs can increase your chance of quitting for good.
- The VA has a telephone Quitline – 1-855-QUIT-VET (1-855-784-8838) you can call for support.

Other Lifestyle Changes



Exercise

- Being more physically active may help you feel better. Ask your provider what kinds of activities or exercise are safe for you to do.



Sleep

- Try to get at least 8 hours of sleep every night.



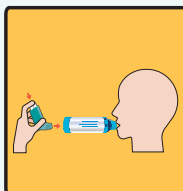
Healthy Diet

- Eating a healthy diet will help you feel better. If your weight is too low, ask your healthcare provider about seeing a dietitian.



Vaccines

- Remember to get your flu shot every year. Talk with your provider about the pneumonia vaccines. These vaccines will help you stay healthy.



Inhalers

- Using inhalers as prescribed can help you feel better and may help you live longer. They can help you do more activities and keep you out of the hospital.



Pulmonary Rehabilitation

- This can help you breathe better and gain strength. It can improve your quality of life and keep you out of the hospital.



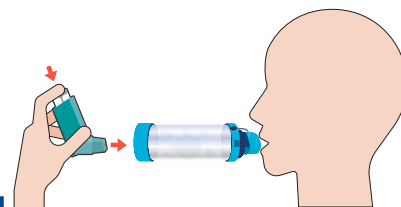
Have an Action Plan

- Work with your healthcare team on a plan you can follow at home. This will help you identify if you need to increase your use of inhalers, take additional medicines, or go to see a healthcare provider for severe symptoms.

**START
YOUR
WAY**

Medicines/Inhalers

Inhalers for COPD can help you feel better and may help you live longer. They can help you do more activities and keep you out of the hospital. Your provider may prescribe more than one inhaler based on your COPD symptoms. Inhalers should be used correctly to work the best. You can find VA Instructional Videos for using inhalers in the Veteran Health Library (<https://www.veteranshealthlibrary.va.gov/>): **Combivent Respimat, Pressurized Metered Dose Inhaler, HandiHaler, Mometasone Twisthaler, How to Use a Nebulizer.**



Rescue Inhalers

Short-acting Beta Agonists (SABA)

Albuterol (Proventil®, Ventolin®, ProAir®)
Levalbuterol (Xopenex®)

- Quickly opens lungs so you can breathe better.
- Use these medicines if you are having difficulty breathing.

Short-acting Muscarinic Antagonist (SAMA)

Ipratropium (Atrovent®)

- You may be prescribed this as an inhaler or a nebulizer.

I Am Taking:

Daily Inhalers

Long-acting Muscarinic Antagonist (LAMA)

Tiotropium (Spiriva®)

Long-acting Beta Agonist (LABA)

Olodaterol (Striverdi®)

Combination LAMA + LABA Inhaler

Olodaterol/Tiotropium (Stiolto®)

Daily use of these inhaler(s) will:

- Improve your lung function
- Less shortness of breath
- Improve your health status
- Reduce visits to the emergency department and fewer hospitalizations for COPD

I Am Taking:

If your symptoms are not controlled using these inhalers, if you are having exacerbations (flare-ups), or if you have asthma, your healthcare provider may have you use an inhaled corticosteroid inhaler.

Examples of corticosteroid inhalers are:

- Mometasone (Asmanex®)
- Fluticasone (Flovent®)

Corticosteroids have a risk of causing thrush (oral fungal infection) in your mouth. Rinse your mouth with water after each use to reduce the risk of thrush.



It is important to tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines, vitamins, and supplements you take. Talk to your healthcare provider about any side effects you feel, or any difficulties you might be having with your medicine.

Ask your provider if you would benefit from a COPD Action Plan. Your provider can help you fill this out.

COPD Action Plan	
Green is GREAT! 	GREEN means your COPD is under control.
• Breathing is normal. • Usual cough and amount of mucus. • Able to do daily activities and exercise. • Sleep well and good appetite.	• Continue taking your daily medicine(s). _____ • For increased shortness of breath and cough use rescue medicine: _____ • If you are prescribed oxygen and/or CPAP, use as directed. • Continue your regular exercise and diet plan • Avoid tobacco smoke and other inhaled irritants • Keep all of your medical appointments.
Yellow is CAUTION. 	YELLOW means CALL or TALK with your healthcare team. Action is needed to prevent an emergency.
• Increased shortness of breath, cough, or increased mucus amount for 1 to 2 days with or without a change in mucus color to yellow or green.	• Continue GREEN ZONE medicines. • Use rescue inhaler or nebulizer as prescribed • Call your VA Case Manager or your VA Healthcare team. Contact number: _____ • Outside of clinic hours call: _____ • Your VA provider may recommend you start medicines in the yellow zone as follows: _____ _____ _____
Red is EMERGENCY! 	RED means GET HELP immediately!
• Rescue inhaler does not help • Fever, chills, chest pain, or coughing up blood • Severe shortness of breath • Not able to talk, sleep, or do any activity	• Call 9–1–1 • Have someone drive you to the nearest emergency room and tell them you are a VA patient. • When you go home, contact your VA healthcare team.

Please call _____ with any questions or concerns.

Veterans Crisis Line
1-800-273-TALK (8255) or Text - 838255