

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease/COPD

Patient & Caregiver Education Worksheet

A practical resource to help you understand COPD, keep important information organized, and prepare for healthcare appointments.

Aging Parent Resource Hub
www.agingparentresourcehub.net

UNDERSTANDING COPD

What Is COPD?

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a long-term lung condition that makes it harder to move air in and out of the lungs. COPD includes conditions such as **emphysema and chronic bronchitis**.

COPD can cause breathing problems that may gradually worsen over time, but treatment and lifestyle changes can help manage symptoms and improve quality of life.

Common COPD Symptoms

- Shortness of breath, especially with activity
- Ongoing cough
- Mucus or phlegm production
- Wheezing
- Chest tightness
- Fatigue or decreased activity tolerance

MY COPD INFORMATION

Date diagnosed: _____

Pulmonologist: _____

Primary care provider: _____

My usual breathing symptoms:

My usual activity level:

My usual oxygen level, if my provider wants me to monitor it:

MY COPD DAILY MANAGEMENT

Medications & Inhalers

COPD treatment may include inhaled medicines and other medications. Different medicines have different purposes, so it's important to understand which medications are for daily control and which are for quick relief, according to your healthcare team's instructions.

MY MEDICATIONS

Medication: _____

Purpose: _____

How often: _____

Questions/side effects:

Medication: _____

Purpose: _____

How often: _____

Questions/side effects:

MY INHALER QUESTIONS

- ☐ I know which inhaler is my daily/controller medication.
- ☐ I know which inhaler is my quick-relief medication, if prescribed.
- ☐ I know how to use my inhaler correctly.
- ☐ I have asked my provider to check my inhaler technique.

My questions about my inhalers:

NHLBI recommends bringing your inhaler to healthcare appointments so your provider can check your technique and determine whether changes are needed.

KNOW YOUR SYMPTOMS

What Is Normal for Me?

One of the most important parts of managing COPD is knowing how you normally feel. A change from your usual symptoms can be an early sign of a **COPD flare-up (exacerbation)**.

MY USUAL SYMPTOMS

Breathing:

Cough:

Mucus/phlegm:

Activity tolerance:

CHANGES TO WATCH FOR

- ☐ More shortness of breath
- ☐ More coughing
- ☐ More mucus than usual
- ☐ Change in mucus color or thickness
- ☐ Increased wheezing
- ☐ Increased fatigue
- ☐ Difficulty sleeping
- ☐ Less ability to perform normal activities

MY PERSONAL WARNING SIGNS

The first signs that my COPD may be getting worse are:

Other changes I want my healthcare team to know about:

MY COPD ACTION PLAN

Know What To Do When Symptoms Change

A written COPD action plan should be created **with your healthcare provider**. It should explain what to do when you're feeling well, when symptoms are getting worse, and when emergency care is needed.

WHEN I'M DOING WELL

My regular medications/treatments:

My usual activities:

Other instructions from my provider:

WHEN MY SYMPTOMS ARE GETTING WORSE

My provider wants me to:

Medication/treatment instructions:

Who should I call?

Phone: _____

WHEN I NEED IMMEDIATE HELP

My provider says I should seek emergency care when:

Emergency instructions:

Severe difficulty breathing, inability to speak because of breathlessness, blue or gray lips/fingernails, confusion, a very fast heartbeat, or treatment that isn't working can be signs of a medical emergency. Follow your provider's specific emergency instructions and seek emergency care when appropriate.

COPD BEST PRACTICES

MEDICATIONS

- Take medications exactly as prescribed.
- Know which inhaler is for daily control and which is for quick relief.
- Keep your medication list current.
- Have your provider check your inhaler technique.

AVOID TRIGGERS

- Know what makes your breathing worse.
- Avoid smoke and other known irritants.
- Ask about protecting yourself from respiratory infections.
- Ask your provider about recommended vaccinations.

STAY ACTIVE

- Ask what activity is safe for you.
- Pace yourself and take breaks when needed.
- Ask whether pulmonary rehabilitation is appropriate.
- Tell your provider if activity becomes harder than usual.

MY NOTES:

My known triggers: _____

Activity my provider recommends: _____

Questions I have: _____

TAKE THIS TO YOUR DOCTOR

Questions I Want to Ask

What should I do when my breathing gets worse?

Which inhaler should I use for quick relief?

Can you check my inhaler technique?

What symptoms mean I should call you?

What symptoms mean I need emergency care?

Is my current treatment working well?

MY NEXT STEPS

Next appointment: _____

Tests/labs: _____

Medication changes: _____

Other instructions: _____

MY COPD GOAL

One thing I want to work on:

RN INSIGHT

Take this worksheet with you to your appointment. Ask your healthcare team to write down the instructions that are specific to you.