

What is COPD?

COPD stands for **chronic obstructive pulmonary disease**. This covers a number of breathing problems; including chronic bronchitis and emphysema.

Chronic cough, phlegm and shortness of breath could be COPD. The sooner you get help the better. The diagnosis is made using a breathing test (Spirometry) often done at your GP surgery.

The most common cause of COPD is cigarette smoking. Other causes include work factors, like mining, and some inherited problems.

Stopping smoking slows the progression of the disease. If you smoke, have you thought of giving up? Contact the NHS Fife Stop Smoking Service on freephone 0800 025 3000 for advice and support.

COPD cannot be cured once you have it, but treatments may help.

It is important to keep fit and active. **Pulmonary rehabilitation** courses are available in your area. These programmes involve exercise and education and can improve quality of life. Ask your doctor or nurse for details.

You will probably have been given inhalers. The ones that open the airways are bronchodilators. You might also get other inhalers and tablets.

Suddenly being more short of breath or having more spit could be a sign of an 'exacerbation'. Your doctor may give you a short course of steroids and/or antibiotics for a few days. Exacerbations are common in COPD. Always seek prompt treatment for an exacerbation.

Very hot or cold weather may affect your chest. In cold weather keep your house warm and wrap up well when you go out. In hot weather stay out of the heat, wear loose clothing, keep your house cool by closing curtains, regularly cool your face and neck with cold water, and drink plenty of water.

To avoid infections a **flu vaccination** every autumn is worthwhile. In addition:

- Try to keep as mobile as you can
- Look after your weight and eat a balanced diet
- Maintain good hand hygiene / washing regime

Support & Self Help

Following diagnosis, people with lung conditions often feel they have no-one to talk to about their experiences and can end up feeling isolated and alone. However, Fife is home to four **BreatheEasy Support Groups** which are designed to provide a forum for discussion, sharing stories and general professional and peer support in relaxed, social environments. To find out more, visit www.nhsfife.org/respiratorymcn or telephone 01333 426544 (Fife patients only)

My Lungs My Life is a comprehensive, free to use website for anyone living with COPD: www.mylungsmylife.org

COPD Action Plan

Your Name:

**Main contact:
GP / Nurse**

**Date Plan
issued:**

**Oxygen
saturation
level when
well**

**Please bring this plan to every
review**

THE MAIN SYMPTOMS OF COPD ARE BREATHLESSNESS AND COUGH

If your symptoms are normal / usual **FOR YOU** continue with your usual inhalers.

Usual medication

Name:
Dose:

Name:
Dose:

Name:
Dose:

Name:
Dose:

Inhaler technique checked:

WHAT ACTION TO TAKE IF YOUR SYMPTOMS GET WORSE

Ask yourself:

Is your cough **worse** than usual?

Then check the colour of your sputum:

Cough sputum onto a white tissue:

⇒ Has your sputum colour changed?

⇒ Has it changed from clear or pale to a darker shade e.g. yellow or green?

If **YES** to both questions

Phone your GP Practice for advice

Make an appointment with your GP/ Nurse

Start antibiotics

and **inform**

IS YOUR BREATHING WORSE THAN USUAL?

If **YES**:

Increase your **RELIEVER TREATMENT** up to a maximum dose as stated below.

RELIEVER

Up to everyhours

Keep a close eye on your symptoms. If you improve within days, resume your usual treatment.

If **NO** improvement, or symptoms **getting worse** after days:

Phone the surgery for advice

Make an urgent appointment

Start steroid tablets

Take tablets (.....mg) once a day for days and **inform**

If you are not back to normal within that time, make an appointment with your nurse / doctor.

Good Inhaler Technique

To ensure your prescribed medication is being delivered in the right dose to the right place – right into your lungs and not just the back of your throat - please ask your nurse, GP, or pharmacist for help with good inhaler technique. Alternatively, videos are available on the My Lungs My Life website (details on back page)

URGENT ACTION

If your cough and / or breathlessness is much worse than usual:

Contact your doctor / nurse for advice
TODAY

Take your maximum dose of reliever inhaler every puffs

Start your steroid tablets

If out-with normal surgery hours contact:
NHS24 on **freephone 111**

Remember to take your inhaler with a spacer if you have one for optimum benefit

EMERGENCY

If you have any of the following:

Very short of breath

Chest pains

Feeling of agitation, fear, drowsiness or confusion

Seek urgent medical advice

Or



Dial 999 for an ambulance.

Show them this plan and your oxygen alert card (if you have one)

Remember to take your medication into hospital with you