

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD): Self-Care Worksheet

Learn how to manage your condition:

- What about the disease process and risks?
- How can medicine, diet, and exercise help?
- What can YOU do to improve your health?

What does COPD mean?

- COPD is a lung disease.
- The airways that carry air to your lungs become narrowed and it becomes harder for you to breathe.
- There are tiny air sacs where the airways end in your lungs.
- These air sacs don't empty and your lungs feel full when you have COPD.
- Besides feeling short of breath, you may cough more often and cough up mucous.
- Shortness of breath may keep you from doing things you would like to do.

COPD can be managed.

This worksheet was put together to help you understand your role ("self-care") in keeping your COPD under control.

Self-care includes:

1. Taking your medicines as ordered by your doctor
2. Eating well
3. Exercising and staying active
4. Using oxygen safely if ordered by your doctor
5. Preventing COPD symptoms from worsening
6. Monitoring yourself for symptoms and taking action right away when they occur
7. Seeing your doctor regularly

How does your shortness of breath affect you? Rate yourself using this table:

I become → When I ↓	A little short of breath	Somewhat short of breath	Very short of breath
Get dressed			
Bathe			
Make meals			
Eat			
Do laundry			
Do housework			
Walk around inside my house			
Walk around outside			



**CHRISTIANA CARE
HEALTH SYSTEM**

Visiting Nurse Association

www.christianacare.org/vna

Medicines:

- Several types of medicines are usually used to manage COPD.
- You may be on more medicines than these.
- Your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist will give you more specific information about your medicines.
- Always check before taking over-the-counter medicine or herbal supplements. Some of these medicines can be harmful for patients with COPD.
- Your home care nurse will work with you to make sure you understand all of your medicines. If you need help, your nurse can show you different ways to help you remember to take your medicines at the right times.
- Many people do not use inhaled medicines correctly. If not used correctly, your symptoms may not be controlled well. Your nurse will watch you use your inhaler and give you tips on using your inhaler better, if you need help.

COPD MEDICINES

Inhaled bronchodilators – short acting

These drugs work by relaxing and opening up your airways. This makes it easier for you to breathe. They are usually taken every 4-6 hours.

I am using: _____

Inhaled bronchodilators – long acting

These drugs work by relaxing and opening up your airways, making it easier for you to breathe. They take effect more slowly than short acting bronchodilators and work for a longer period of time. They are usually taken every 12 hours.

I am using: _____

Inhaled Corticosteroids

These drugs decrease inflammation and swelling in your airways. They decrease the amount of mucous your airways produce. Rinse your mouth out after you use inhaled corticosteroids.

I am using: _____

Oral Corticosteroids (pills)

These drugs decrease inflammation and swelling in your airways. They decrease the amount of mucous your airways produce. Oral corticosteroids are used only for short periods of time when your symptoms have worsened.

I am taking: _____

Oxygen

If your blood level is low, your doctor will prescribe oxygen. You may need to use it all of the time, just during certain times of day, or with activities such as sleep or exercise. It is very important that you use your oxygen as your doctor has ordered it – oxygen will help you feel better and be more active. A medical supply company will deliver and teach you about your oxygen. Your home care nurse will also teach you how to manage your oxygen at home and when you go out.

I am using Oxygen: _____

Diet & Nutrition:

- It is important to eat a healthy diet when you have COPD.
- If you are underweight and do not eat enough, you will have less energy.
- If you are overweight, it will be harder to be active and you may have more shortness of breath.
- Your nurse or a dietitian may help you review your own diet, help you read food labels, and give you lists of healthy foods.
- Fruits and vegetables and protein foods such as meat, fish, eggs, and milk are good for you.

There are certain things that make it easier for you to eat when you have COPD.

Check off the things you think you can do.

- Eat a balanced diet with enough calories
- Ask your doctor or nurse if vitamin supplements would be helpful
- Drink enough fluids – this helps keep your mucous looser
- Eat smaller meals more often
- Decrease the amount of gas forming foods you eat – they make your stomach fuller. This may increase shortness of breath.
- Include fiber in your diet to decrease constipation
- Eat slowly and talk less while you eat
- Sit in a chair that allows for good posture while you eat
- Avoid activity or exercise for an hour after you eat
- Eating a diet lower in carbohydrates may decrease shortness of breath and improve your ability to exercise

Staying Active and Safe:

- Exercise is very important when you have COPD. Even if you have severe shortness of breath, you can benefit from an exercise program. Exercises may include chair exercises, walking, or using a stationary bike.
- Exercise will:
 - ◆ Improve your ability to cope with shortness of breath
 - ◆ Increase your energy and make you feel less tired
 - ◆ Make you feel better
- Before starting an exercise program, your COPD symptoms should be under control.
- It is important to start slowly when you are not used to exercise. A home physical therapist can help you begin your exercise program.
- You will be taught ways to safely exercise such as:
 - ◆ Using pursed lip breathing to control shortness of breath
 - ◆ Pacing yourself and stopping to rest when needed
 - ◆ Rating your shortness of breath (see Borg Scale)
 - ◆ Your doctor may tell you to use a short acting bronchodilator before exercise
 - ◆ You may use a “pulse ox” monitor to check your oxygen level while you exercise

Modified Borg Scale

You should monitor yourself for fatigue and shortness of breath when you exercise. Your home care nurse or therapist will teach you how to use the Borg Scale so that you can rate your shortness of breath and/or fatigue during activity and exercise.

Scale	Severity
0	No breathlessness/Fatigue at all
1	Very Slight Breathlessness/Fatigue
2	Slight Breathlessness/Fatigue
3	Moderate Breathlessness/Fatigue
4	Somewhat Severe Breathlessness/Fatigue
5	Severe Breathlessness/Fatigue
6	
7	Very Severe Breathlessness/Fatigue
8	
9	Very Very Severe Breathlessness/Fatigue
10	Maximum Breathlessness/Fatigue

Conserve Your Energy:

Learn how to pace your activities or do them in an easier way. You will do more and be less short of breath. A few examples are:

- Walk at a slow and comfortable pace
- Use a bath stool or bench during bathing
- Consider sponge bathing
- Dress seated instead of standing
- Consider use of bedside commode
- Prepare for activities by resting first and using breathing techniques
- Ask for help when you need it

Telehealth Strategies...

In addition to seeing you in your home, your home care nurse may also suggest or use "telehealth" to monitor your COPD.

What is telehealth ?

1. Your home care nurse calls you on the phone – simple telephone monitoring.

You will be asked questions about your changes in your shortness of breath, and other symptoms and activities. Your nurse will review information you need to know to better manage your COPD.

2. Telemonitoring

A monitoring system is placed in your home. This may include special devices to measure oxygen levels or your temperature. The monitor may also include questions on a computer that you answer each day. Some systems include computer screens where you and your nurse can see each other while you talk. Your nurse will teach you how to use the telemonitoring system.

Your information (oxygen levels, temperature, etc.) is sent to the home care agency computer, usually over the telephone lines. A nurse at the agency checks your information every day. If there are changes, your nurse will call you or visit you at home.

3. You call the home care agency

Your shortness of breath may be worse, or you may just want to ask a question. The home care nurse may give you advice over the telephone, may want to see you at your home to check your condition, or may tell you to call 911 if your symptoms are severe.

Preventing COPD Symptoms from getting worse

The following actions will help keep your COPD under control and help you to stay out of the hospital or emergency room:

- Stop smoking – even when you already have COPD, quitting smoking can help your lungs work better
- Get a flu vaccine every year
- Get a pneumonia vaccine at least once – your doctor may recommend that you have this vaccine every 5 to 10 years
- Decrease your risk of infection
 - ♦ Wash your hands often
 - ♦ Stay away from persons with colds or flu
- Avoid exposure to things that irritate your lungs
 - ♦ Extreme weather – very hot or very cold
 - ♦ Tobacco smoke
 - ♦ Smog – pay attention to air quality alerts and stay indoors as much as possible during alert times

Your Action Plan:

Use this guide to help you report changes in your symptoms to your doctor or home care provider.

Reporting symptoms early may keep you out of the hospital.

You are doing WELL when:

- You can do your normal activities
- You have no changes in your symptoms
- Your usual medicines are controlling your symptoms

Call your home care nurse when:

- You have increased shortness of breath with usual activity
- You are coughing more than usual
- You have increased sputum or changes in color
- You have to use short acting medicines more often
- You feel more tired or restless

Call 911 RIGHT AWAY when:

- You have severe shortness of breath, or shortness of breath at rest
- You have chest pain that doesn't go away
- Your lips or fingernails turn gray or blue
- You feel unusually sleepy

My Personal Plan:

I would like to work on the following areas to manage my COPD:

- Taking my Medicines
- Regular Exercise
- Monitoring My Shortness of Breath
- Eating Healthy
- Stop Smoking

