

COPD Flare-Up Action Plan

Following this plan can help to **keep you well** and prevent you from getting a **COPD flare up** and needing to go to hospital. Keep it where you and your family can find it (like on a fridge or next to your calendar). Watch for a flare up when you get a cold/flu, are tired, exposed to smoke/pollution, if weather changes or feeling stressed or anxious.

Understand the purpose of each inhaler: The table in the green section reminds you of the purpose of each inhaler, how many puffs and how often to use them. It is important to understand which inhalers are for **prevention** and **which** is your **reliever** inhaler (used to relieve or treat **symptoms**), see yellow zone (below) for when to increase this.

GREEN ZONE: The goal is to keep your COPD well controlled and avoid COPD flare-ups that may require you to go to hospital. **Your COPD is well controlled if:**

- You have no change in your symptoms (shortness of breath, phlegm or cough)
- No change in your ability to do your normal activities or exercise

Action:

Use your inhalers for **prevention** all the time, even when you are well, as they can improve COPD control and prevent you from getting a flare-up (getting sick) if you take them regularly.

Inhaler (or COPD related medications)	Number of puffs (or pills) and how often	Purpose

YELLOW ZONE: If you experience **ANY** of the following symptoms, you are having a **FLARE-UP**:

- **Call your doctor’s office** to let them know that you are in the **YELLOW ZONE** and follow the actions listed:
- If you are on oxygen increase to _____L/min (or as directed by your doctor)

Symptom experienced:	Action: Call your doctor’s office AND:
More shortness of breath than usual for 2 days OR More sputum or phlegm (mucus) than usual for 2 days	1. Increase your reliever inhaler: _____ to: _____ puffs _____ as needed 2. If your shortness of breath does not improve after _____hours, then start your “prednisone for flare-up action plan” : prednisone _____mg once daily x _____days
Sputum has changed colour to green, yellow or rust	3. Start your “antibiotic for flare-up action plan” _____
If your symptoms do not improve in 48 hours.	4. Call your doctor’s office for an urgent appointment or go to hospital if doctor’s office is closed or you cannot be seen.

RED ZONE: Danger: If you experience **ANY** of the following symptoms, **you need to call 911 to go to hospital**:

- Extremely short of breath or
- Feel confused, agitated or drowsy or
- Have sudden chest pain

If you have questions call HealthLink BC 811 anytime 24/7

How you can benefit from regular use of your prevention inhaler.

Using your prevention inhalers regularly can have the following benefits:

- 1) Decrease the risk of you having a COPD flare-up and needing to
 - Be admitted to hospital
 - Take antibiotics and see your doctor
- 2) Improve your quality of life (when measured using standard questionnaires).
- 3) Improved test results on lung function tests

It is important to realize that the benefits of prevention inhalers are not just related to breathing or feeling short of breath.

Understanding the different symptoms of COPD and how it impacts you.

Having COPD can affect your overall wellbeing (or quality of life) . But this can also be improved by use of prevention inhalers. COPD symptoms can include:

- Coughing
- Phlegm in chest
- Chest tightness
- Feeling breathless when you walk up stairs or a hill
- Reduced ability to do activities at home
- Not feeling confident to leave the house
- Poor sleep
- Reduced energy

You can measure the overall impact of COPD on your life by the COPD Assessment Test (CAT) at www.catesonline.org

After your COPD flare-up:

Book an appointment to see your doctor to make sure you are on the correct treatment and your symptoms are improving. You may also need to get refills of your COPD flare-up medications.

My COPD Flare-Up Record:

After a COPD flare-up, it is important to keep track of which medications you took. Keep track of the date of flare-ups, whether you took prednisone, what antibiotic (if any) and whether you had to go to the hospital. Bring this information with you to your doctor appointments.

Date of Flare-Up					
Did you take prednisone?					
Did you take an antibiotic? Write which one.					
Did you go to hospital?					



Making better
decisions together
with patients
and families

Richmond Hospital Preventable Adverse Drug Event Program
Funded by The Richmond Hospital Foundation
and the Vancouver Coastal Health
Research Institute Innovation & Translational Research Award 2016.
Adapted from the Lung Association Action Plan

For more copies, go online at <http://vch.eduhealth.ca>
or email pthem@vch.ca and quote Catalogue No. **FN.510.F66**
© Vancouver Coastal Health, January 2019

The information in this document is intended solely for the person
to whom it was given by the health care team.
www.vch.ca