

Being an active partner in your care

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THREE KEY ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE TO LIVE WELL WITH COPD

If you have Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (also known as COPD, emphysema or chronic bronchitis), and whether your symptoms are mild or severe, there are three actions you can take to feel better, slow down damage to your lungs, and have a better quality of life.

Take these three key actions to improve your symptoms and your wellbeing:

ACTION 1: Ask my GP about participating in a pulmonary rehabilitation program

YES

Pulmonary rehabilitation, an exercise and education program designed specifically for people with COPD, is one of the best things you can do to help you feel better and live well with COPD. The word pulmonary means 'related to the lungs'. Research has found that people who have participated in a pulmonary rehabilitation program:



Have fewer visits to hospital



Have fewer flare-ups



Feel less tired and short of breath



Have improved overall wellbeing

How does it work?

Specially trained health professionals design an exercise and education program to suit your needs. It is most often a six to eight-week group program with exercises and information for you to incorporate into your day-to-day life including:

- how your lungs work
- how to manage breathlessness, and
- the steps you can take to live well with your condition.

To maintain the benefits that you gain from pulmonary rehabilitation, continue to exercise most days after completing the program. Continuing to follow the guidance you have learnt from the program will make it easier for you to do your daily activities such

as showering and shopping, and the things you enjoy such as socialising with friends, gardening or walking.



DVA pays for all Gold Card holders and some White Card holders to receive services from a range of healthcare providers including those that offer pulmonary rehabilitation services.

ACTION 2: Ask my GP about having a DVA-funded medicines review

YES



Although keeping active and understanding your condition is an effective way to improve symptoms overall, inhaled medicines can also help control your symptoms. An inhaler device is a device that delivers medicines into your lungs to help control your symptoms. Each of the different inhaler devices require a specific set of steps. It can be tricky to use your inhaler

correctly, especially if you use more than one type.

To make sure you are using your inhaler correctly and getting the full effect of your inhaled medicines, ask your GP, nurse or pharmacist to check your technique at your next appointment.

If you use more than one inhaled medicine, it is important to understand which one to use and when. Some inhaled medicines might be used every day and others only as symptoms worsen.

Ask your GP about having a medicines review if you would like to learn more about your medicines for COPD and how to use them correctly. A DVA-funded medicines review is where a pharmacist comes to your home (or talks to you on the phone or via a video call) and goes through all your medicines with you, to make sure you understand what they are for and how best to use them. The pharmacist can check your inhaler device technique and talk with you about your medicines.

You can watch a video on how to use your device at the Lung Foundation Australia website:

<https://lungfoundation.com.au/resources/?search=inhaler>

You can also ask your pharmacist to show you the active ingredient name on each of your medicines. Recent changes to the way medicines are prescribed means that medicines prescribed by your doctor will list the active ingredient name rather than their brand name.

ACTION 3: Ask my GP or nurse to help me fill out a COPD Action Plan or review my current action plan

YES



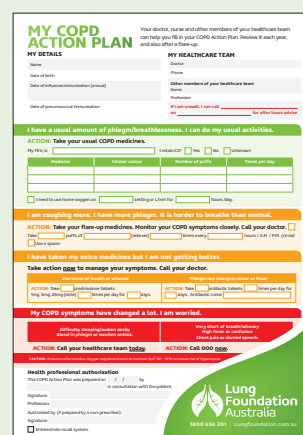
A COPD Action Plan is a document with clear written instructions on what you should do if your symptoms of COPD get worse (a flare-up) including which medicines to take and when to contact your GP or healthcare team. Having a written COPD Action Plan is the best way for you to know what your usual COPD medicines are and when to start treatment if you are having a flare-up, such as having difficulty breathing.

Work together with your GP, nurse, or other members of your healthcare team to fill out your action plan; they can explain to you when and how to use it. Make sure you understand what the information on your plan means. Ask your healthcare team to review your plan each year and after every flare-up.

Tip: Stick your action plan on your fridge or have it in a place you can easily find.

For a copy of a COPD Action Plan template, visit Lung Foundation Australia, at:

https://lungfoundation.com.au/resources/?condition=9&user_category=31&search=Action%20plan



✓ What other actions can I take?

As well as working closely with your GP and healthcare team you can help improve your symptoms and prevent flare-ups by taking these actions.



Keep your vaccinations up-to-date

Flu or pneumonia can be very serious if you have COPD. Have a flu vaccine every year (usually in March or April) and ask your GP when your pneumococcal vaccine is due. Having COPD also means you may develop serious illness if you become infected with the COVID virus. Talk to your GP about having the COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available.



Quit smoking

If you smoke, quitting is the number one way you can slow COPD progression. If you need help to quit smoking, talk to your GP or pharmacist or call Quitline on 13 78 48.



Exercise often if you can

If you can, exercise for at least 30 minutes, 5 times a week. The activity you choose to do should make you feel a little out of breath. Talk to your GP if you are unsure about whether you should exercise. They might suggest a pulmonary rehabilitation program or that you see a physiotherapist or exercise physiologist who can develop a safe

and tailored program for you. If you have participated in a pulmonary rehabilitation program, ask your GP about an appropriate follow-on program such as the Lungs in Action Program, a community-based exercise program for people with chronic lung conditions.



Talk with your GP about having a care plan

If you have COPD, having your GP and other health professionals on your team may help keep you well and out of hospital. Developing a care plan in partnership with your GP, such as having a GP Management Plan, gives you an opportunity to ask questions about your condition as well as to find out which members of the health-care team can help you.

Some people with COPD may be eligible to enrol in the Coordinated Veterans' Care (CVC) Program. Ask your GP to see if they offer this service and to determine your eligibility.

DVA pays for all Gold Card holders and some White Card holders to receive services from a range of healthcare providers as clinically required.

For further information about COPD and the steps you can take to live better with COPD visit the Lung Foundation Australia website: <https://lungfoundation.com.au/patients-carers/living-with-a-lung-disease/copd/overview/>