

## LIVING WITH COPD DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

If you have COPD then this leaflet is for you.

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### BE INFORMED

#### LEARN ABOUT SYMPTOMS OF CORONAVIRUS COVID-19

- Common symptoms of COVID-19 are:
  - High temperature (>81% of people with coronavirus COVID-19)
  - New continuous cough (>66%)
  - Fatigue (>44%).

Other symptoms include sputum production, muscle aches, sore throat, headache, and in some people loss of sense of smell or taste.

- More serious warning signs include (this list is not complete):
  - Trouble breathing or shortness of breath (which will be a common symptom in COPD)
  - Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
  - New confusion or inability to wake from sleep
  - Bluish lips or face.

If you have common symptoms of COVID-19 and any of the serious symptoms then **seek medical attention immediately**.

This advice is based on the coronavirus [symptom checker](#) by NHS Inform Scotland, US CDC guidance on [what to do if you are sick](#) and the findings of the [Centre for Evidence-Based Medicine](#) and the University of Oxford.

#### LEARN TO DISTINGUISH COVID-19 FROM COPD EXACERBATIONS

Symptoms	COVID-19	Exacerbations of COPD
High fever	Common	Rare
Cough	Common (usually dry)	Common (usually wet)
Breathlessness	<b>Sometimes.</b> This is a sign of a more severe COVID-19 that <b>needs medical attention</b>	Common
Loss of sense of smell or taste	Sometimes	No
Muscle ache	Sometimes	Rare
Wheeze	Rare	Sometimes
Runny nose	Rare	Sometimes

**Know what your normal COPD exacerbation is like and monitor for changes.**

- High fever** is a common symptom of COVID-19, but not a very common symptom of COPD exacerbations (varies by individual).
- Dry cough** is a common symptom of COVID-19, whereas most people with exacerbations of COPD have more of a productive cough (varies by individual).
- Increased wheezing** can occur during COPD exacerbations, but is rare in COVID-19.
- Runny nose** is rare in COVID-19.

## PHARMACISTS

- **Shortness of breath** is a common symptom of both exacerbations of COPD and severe COVID-19. If you develop shortness of breath together with any main symptom of COVID-19 such as a new cough or high temperature then **phone 111** urgently.

This advice is based on BMJ Best Practice for [COVID-19](#) and [acute exacerbations](#) of COPD and on recommendations from the [COPD Foundation](#) and [British Lung Foundation](#).

### BE PREPARED

In case you may need to go to hospital, **prepare a hospital bag** including:

- your emergency contact
- a list of the medications you take (including dose and frequency)
- any information on your planned care appointments
- things for an overnight stay (snacks, pyjamas, toothbrush, medication and so on)
- an advanced care plan if available.

### BE SAFE

Avoid infections by following [prevention](#), [stay at home](#), or [shielding](#) guidance from [NHS Inform Scotland](#).

### GETTING MEDICAL HELP IF YOU HAVE COPD

IF YOU HAVE **SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19** SUCH AS A HIGH FEVER OR NEW COUGH AND YOU HAVE COPD THEN USE THE ONLINE CORONAVIRUS SERVICE IN [SCOTLAND](#) OR [ENGLAND](#) OR **CALL 111**.

Call 999	Seek medical help
<p>If you have <b>trouble breathing</b> or <b>sudden shortness of breath</b>, and one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• your chest feels tight or heavy</li> <li>• you have a pain that spreads to your arms, back, neck and jaw</li> <li>• you feel or are being sick</li> </ul>	<p><b>Call 111</b> if you have symptoms of COVID-19, and one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• you have <b>shortness of breath</b> or other serious symptoms of COVID-19</li> <li>• you develop <b>new symptoms</b>, such as coughing greenish or yellow phlegm; chest pain that gets worse with breathing or coughing; or you are being sick</li> <li>• your <b>symptoms get worse</b></li> <li>• you do not get better after 7 days</li> <li>• you feel <b>you cannot cope</b> with your condition at home</li> </ul>
<p><b>In an emergency or if you are seriously ill</b> <b>Tell the call handler if you or members of your household may have COVID-19</b></p>	<p><b>If your COPD self-management plan tells you to contact your healthcare professional</b></p>

This advice is based on guidance from [NHS NICE](#) for COVID-19 and COPD, recommendations from the [British Lung Foundation](#) for people with COPD, information from the [Primary Care Respiratory Society for COVID-19](#), and the general advice from [NHS Inform Scotland](#).

### LIVING WITH COPD DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

<b>1</b>	If you have <b>severe or very severe COPD</b> then follow the government's <a href="#">shielding advice</a> .
<b>2</b>	<b>Take your inhaled medications and tablets as they have been prescribed</b> to ensure that your COPD is as stable as possible. The better your lung condition is controlled, the less likely you are to get complications from viral infections.

## PHARMATICS

3	<b>Follow your COPD self-management plan</b> – it may be more important now than ever!
4	<b>Use your COPD inhalers correctly</b> – make every puff count. You may find these <a href="#">educational videos</a> from Asthma UK helpful.
5	<b>Keep supplies of your medications</b> , but for no more than 30 days so that other people can get them. Register with your GP practice for electronic repeat prescriptions and other <a href="#">online services</a> . Then access your prescriptions by phoning the surgery or online.
6	<b>Speak with your doctor</b> about whether you may need an <b>advance care plan</b> .
7	<b>If you do not have symptoms of the coronavirus</b> and you need to attend an appointment try to do it alone if possible, or with no more than one other person to reduce the risk of getting or spreading the coronavirus.
8	<b>Try to boost your <a href="#">mental</a> and <a href="#">physical</a> health</b> if you can.
9	<b>If you smoke, <a href="#">quit smoking</a>.</b>

This advice is based on the [NHS NICE](#) COVID-19 guidelines for COPD and on recommendations from the [British Lung Foundation](#) guidelines for people with COPD.

### SELF-MANAGEMENT OF COPD EXACERBATIONS

1	Follow your <b>COPD self-management plan</b> if you think you have an exacerbation (worsening of symptoms). Start steroid tablets and/or antibiotics as explained in your plan.
2	<b>Get medical help if you need to.</b>
3	<b>If you do not have symptoms of the coronavirus</b> and you need to attend an appointment try to do it <b>alone if possible</b> , or with no more than one other person to reduce the risk of getting or spreading the coronavirus.
4	If you think you have an exacerbation that <b>feels different from your “usual” exacerbation</b> then <b>seek medical advice from your care team</b> .
5	If you have <b>symptoms of COVID-19</b> such as high fever, dry cough, or muscle ache, you should <a href="#">self-isolate</a> . <b>Do not use your rescue pack</b> if you only have these symptoms. <b>Call 111</b> .

This advice is based on [NHS NICE](#) COVID-19 guidelines for COPD and recommendations of the [COPD Foundation](#) and the [British Lung Foundation](#).









### SELF-MANAGEMENT OF COVID-19

1	<b>Monitor your symptoms and get medical help if needed.</b>
2	<b>Rest, sleep, and drink plenty of water</b> to avoid dehydration.
3	<b>Control your symptoms</b> by taking over-the-counter medications such as paracetamol. Please follow the instructions and check that you do not have side effects.

This advice is based on the COVID-19 guidance from [NHS Scotland](#) and [NHS England](#).

### MEDICATIONS AND EQUIPMENT

Continue taking your inhaled medications, tablets, and your nebuliser if you have been given one, and prescribed medication to use in it, as advised by your healthcare professional. This should help you to have the best possible lung function and reduce the risk of flare-ups.

MEDICATIONS	
<p><b>Steroid inhalers</b></p> 	<p>If you are prescribed inhalers, <b>continue to use them</b> as prescribed by your healthcare professional. There is no evidence that using inhaled corticosteroids for COPD increases the risk associated with COVID-19.</p>
<p><b>Steroid tablets</b></p> 	<p>If you are prescribed steroid tablets, <b>continue to use them</b> as prescribed by your healthcare professional. They help to control the inflammation in the lungs and stopping them can be harmful.</p> <p><b>Do not start steroid tablets for symptoms of COVID-19</b>, for example fever, dry cough, or muscle ache.</p>
<p><b>Antibiotics</b></p> 	<p>If you are prescribed prophylactic antibiotics, <b>continue to take them</b> as prescribed by your healthcare professional, <b>unless you have side effects or allergy. Contact your care team if that happens.</b></p> <p><b>Do not start antibiotics for symptoms of COVID-19</b> (for example fever, dry cough, or muscle ache), unless advised by your healthcare professional.</p>
EQUIPMENT	
<p><b>Oxygen</b></p> 	<p>If you receive long-term oxygen, <b>do not adjust your oxygen flow rate</b> unless advised by your healthcare professional.</p> <p>If you receive ambulatory oxygen (portable oxygen, or “oxygen for walking”) <b>do not start using it at rest or at home.</b></p>
<p><b>Nebuliser</b></p> 	<p><b>You can continue to use your nebuliser</b> if you have been given one by your healthcare professional. Aerosol particles come from the fluid in the nebuliser chamber and will not carry virus particles and will not spread infection.</p>
<p><b>Non-invasive ventilation</b></p> 	<p>If you use non-invasive ventilation, <b>use it in a well-ventilated room and away from other members of your household.</b> This is to prevent infecting other members of your household.</p>
TECHNIQUES	
<p><b>Airway clearance techniques</b></p> 	<p>If you currently use lung clearance techniques, <b>continue to do so in a well-ventilated room and away from other members of your household</b> if possible. Advise other members of your household not to enter the room until enough time has passed to reduce the risk of getting infected.</p>
<p><b>Hygiene</b></p> 	<p><b>Maintain good hygiene</b> to avoid getting COVID-19.</p> <p><b>Wash your hands and clean equipment regularly</b> (including face masks, mouth pieces, spacers, peak flow meters, nebulisers) using washing-up liquid and following the manufacturer's cleaning instructions.</p> <p><b>Do not share any equipment with anyone else.</b></p>

This advice is based on the [NHS NICE COVID-19 guidelines](#) and advice from the [British Lung Foundation](#).

**Disclaimer:** This leaflet is for information only and should NOT be used for the diagnosis or treatment of medical conditions. Although we have used all reasonable care in compiling the information, we make no representations or warranties, express or implied, as to accuracy, fitness for purpose, quality, or completeness in relation to the information in this leaflet. This leaflet has NOT been formally reviewed by the NHS. Please consult a doctor or health care team for diagnosis and treatment of medical conditions.