



What you need to know about...

COPD Flare-Ups

A COPD flare-up, also known as an exacerbation, can be scary for both the person living with COPD and his/her caregiver. COPD flare-ups can be minor, but often can be severe. It is important to know what a flare-up looks like and how to respond. Call 911 immediately if you are experiencing a COPD emergency (fast or irregular heartbeat, difficulty walking or talking, or breathing fast and hard).

Prevention Tips

Be aware of signs and symptoms. Call your doctor if you notice any changes. It's a good idea to:



Avoid others who are sick



Wash hands regularly



Discuss nutrition and pulmonary rehab with your doctor



Stop smoking



Get proper vaccines (flu, pneumonia)

Preparation

Even with the best prevention practice, a flare-up may still occur. It's important that you:

- Speak with your provider about the best medications for you
- Know your triggers and avoidance strategies
- Keep a current list of medications
- Know the locations of emergency rooms and urgent care clinics
- Prepare your home with food, water, medications, and medical device supplies

Response



Develop an action plan with your provider



Track and review signs and symptoms



Communicate symptoms with your caregiver



Contact your doctor when symptoms worsen

Know the Warning Signs



Ongoing cough or cough that produces a lot of mucus



Shortness of breath or chest tightness



Cold or flu-like symptoms



Whistling or wheezing sound when breathing