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

Reference list available at: https://resphealth.org/reference-lists/