



Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

Medications

What are COPD medications used for?

Since COPD is usually progressive, regular treatment options should be ongoing unless significant side effects occur. Medication plans are introduced based on the level of severity and symptoms. Your provider may prescribe medication as part of your treatment plan. COPD treatment consists of medication and non-medication therapies. Medications are used to:

- Prevent and control symptoms
- Reduce the frequency and worsening of COPD symptoms
- Improve your breathing
- Improve your ability to exercise

Medications

The following classes of medications are commonly used in treating COPD. While we have tried to provide multiple examples, the landscape of medications changes on a regular basis and we encourage you to contact your provider to determine what medication plan is best for you.

Inhaled Bronchodilators

- Help relax tight muscles around the airways
- Taken either on an as-needed basis for relief of symptoms or on a regular basis to prevent or reduce symptoms
- Example: Fast or long-acting beta-2 agonists (Ventolin, ProAir), anticholinergics (Atrovent, Incruse Ellipta, Spiriva Respimat) and/or combination bronchodilator therapy (Anoro Ellipta, Stiloto Respimat)

Inhaled Corticosteroids

- Help reduce the frequency of exacerbation (flare-ups) by reducing inflammation in the airways
- Recommended for patients with more advanced COPD and repeated exacerbation
- Example: Inhaled corticosteroid (Arnuity Ellipta) and combination corticosteroid-bronchodilator therapy (Breo Ellipta, Advair, Symbicort)
- Make sure to "swish and spit" after use

Oral Corticosteroids

- Help reduce inflammation during an exacerbation (flare-up)
- Long-term treatment not recommended
- Example: Prednisone or methylprednisolone
- Make sure to "swish and spit" after use

PDE 4 Inhibitors

- Chronic medication that reduces hospitalizations and flare ups related to COPD
- Used as an add-on medication to long-acting inhalers
- Example: Roflumilast

Methyxanthines

- Chronic medication used to help decrease shortness or breath
- Interacts with many medications
- Example: Theophylline