COPD:

A Workbook for Vermont Patients, Families and Caregivers

Breathe Easier — Together

Produced by the Vermont Department of Health, COPD Program

Acknowledgements

Three booklets have been prepared to support Vermonters impacted by COPD, their families and caregivers, and primary care providers who prevent, treat, and care for those with COPD to help "Breathe Easier – Together:"

1. COPD – A Workbook for Vermont Patient's Families and Caregivers
2. COPD – A Guide for Supportive Therapies
3. COPD – A Provider's Guide

The first two booklets are for individuals impacted by COPD and their families. They offer guidance and tools for navigating the care process and supporting self-management. The last booklet is designed for primary care providers who provide clinical care to those impacted by COPD and highlights national guideline care standards and best practices.

Authors:

Heather Nelson, BSRT, RRT, Safety & Quality Littleton Regional Healthcare, Littleton, New Hampshire

Jen Piette, BSRT, RRT, Copley Hospital, Morrisville, Vermont

Kayla Grout, RRT, Clinical Educator, Respiratory Therapy, University of Vermont Health Network – Central Vermont Medical Center, Berlin, Vermont

Additional Acknowledgements

Clinical Oversight:

Dr. Ram Baalachandran, MBBS – Pulmonologist, Pulmonary Disease and Critical Care Medicine, UVM Internal Medicine.

Reviewers:

Veronica Jedlovszky, MD – Pulmonologist, Pulmonary and Sleep Medicine

Samantha M. Helinski, MSN, RN, CWOCN, CCCTM – Senior Clinical Transitions Liaison, Case Management, Rutland Regional Medical Center

Diana Gibbs, MHA – Vice President, Community Health Improvement, Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital

Emily Groebner, MPH – Senior Evaluator I, Professional Data Analysts

COPD Quality Improvement Provider Network Input:

Laura Vanderhill, LSW, MHA – Senior Quality Improvement Specialist, Health Centric Advisor

Fredrick Garrow, MSN, RN, RN-C, NE-BC – Transitional Care Registered Nurse, Rutland Regional Medical Center

Hannah Willett, MPH – COPD Analyst, Health Statistics and Informatics, Vermont Department of Health

Rhonda Williams – Director, Tobacco and Respiratory Control; Alzheimer's and Healthy Aging; Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, Vermont Department of Health

Publication Support:

Karen Casper, PhD – Vermont COPD Program Manager, Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, Vermont Department of Health

Dana Ward, MBA, MPH – Communication Director, Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, Vermont Department of Health

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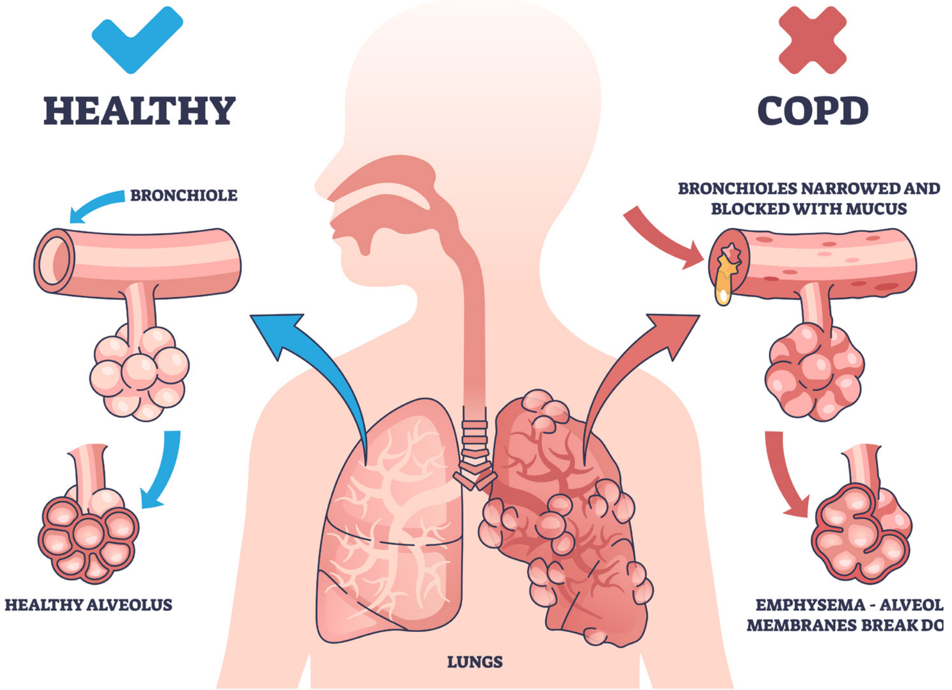
To request additional copies of any of these booklets and the COPD Action Plan please email: AHS - VDH COPD Program AHS.VDHCOPDProgram@vermont.gov.

Table of Contents

What is COPD?

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) is a long-term (chronic) condition that makes it hard to breathe. In healthy lungs, air flows easily, and oxygen is delivered to the body. With COPD, the tubes in your lungs (bronchioles or airways) and the air sacs (alveoli) get smaller, swollen, damaged, or blocked.



There are two main types of COPD:

Chronic Bronchitis

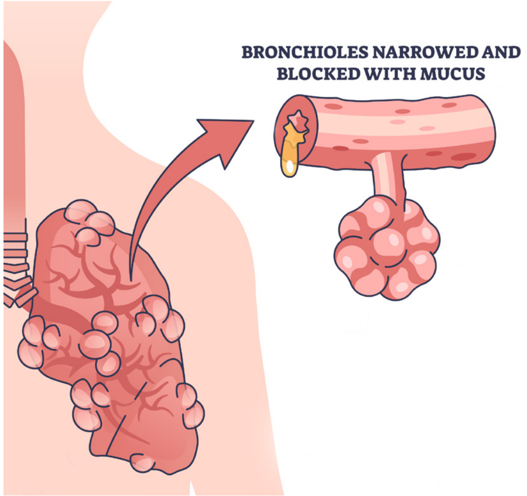
The tubes in your lungs are swollen and full of thick mucus (or gunk).

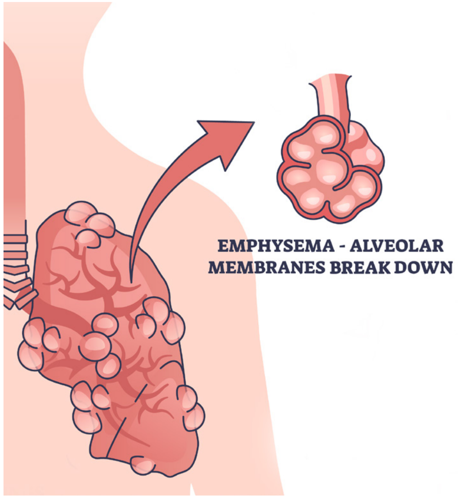
You cough a lot and bring up this gunk.

Emphysema

The tiny air sacs in your lungs are damaged.

It becomes harder to breathe in and out.





COPD Exposure and Risk Factors

These are common risks linked to developing COPD. You can lower your chances by minimizing or avoiding these risks:

- Smoking
- Exposure to smoke (secondhand smoke)
- Workplace hazards (dusts, vapor, fumes, chemicals)
- Home exposures (heating fuels, wood stoves, dust in carpet)
- Individual health factors (birth weight, prematurity, genetics, developmental abnormalities, chronic pediatric illnesses)

Signs of COPD—What You Might Feel

The signs can be different for each person, but common ones are:

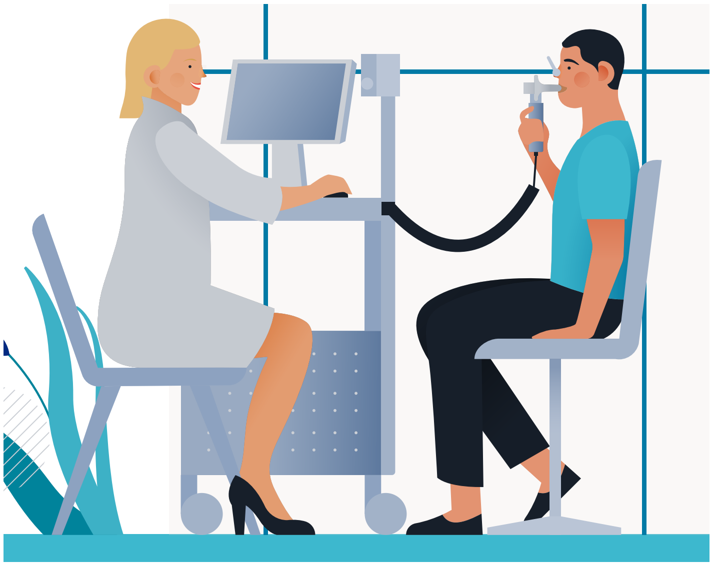
- A cough that won't go away
- A lot of mucus (especially when you wake up)
- Shortness of breath or feeling like it's hard to breathe
- Feeling very tired or lacking energy
- Wheezing (a whistling sound when you breathe)
- Colds and other respiratory illnesses that become much worse or last longer than normal

Confirming or Diagnosing COPD

Some people with respiratory health conditions other than COPD (e.g., like heart failure, bronchiectasis, asthma, etc.) may have been incorrectly diagnosed with COPD based on similar symptoms but without proper screening.

Diagnosis of COPD is usually confirmed with symptoms and spirometry (or other pulmonary function test) that measures how much air you can inhale and exhale. Chest imaging (like an X-ray or CAT Scan) may also confirm COPD. People who have been told they have COPD without proper screening should talk to their health care provider about confirming this diagnosis.

If you have any of the signs of COPD along with certain risk factors, your provider will likely perform or send you for a breathing test. This test is often called Spirometry or a Pulmonary Function Test (PFT) or lung function test.



Breathing tests:

- Show how well your lungs work
- Help your doctor confirm or diagnose if you have COPD
- Help your doctor decide on how best to treat you

Once diagnosed, you can take steps to slow the progression of COPD. Doing so helps you breathe more easily, maintain quality of life, prevent emergencies, and support overall health.

How COPD Changes Over Time

COPD often begins slowly, sometimes with just a cough. Over time, it may get worse, with breathing becoming harder over months or years. As COPD progresses, symptoms may worsen, become more uncomfortable, and cause further decline in lung function. This makes it harder to breathe and more difficult to carry out daily activities and exercise.

On the following page are the stages of COPD and things that can help while in that stage.

Stages of COPD	What Helps
Stage 1: Mild	
You have occasional coughing and some mucus Your breathing feels mostly normal You may not know you have COPD	Healthy habits, including exercise, good nutrition, social engagement, etc. Quitting smoking Regular health care checkups Staying up-to-date on vaccinations
Stage 2: Moderate	
You have more frequent coughing and mucus You have shortness of breath, especially when walking or climbing stairs	Taking prescribed medications (often through inhalers) Breathing exercises and pulmonary rehabilitation (or other rehab programs) Staying active Checking oxygen levels Planning future care goals and supports
Stage 3: Severe	
Your breathing is difficult, even with light activity Flare-ups occur more often and last longer You may feel tired, weak, or anxious	Adjustments to prescribed medications Oxygen therapy Medications for severe breathlessness (such as opioids, if prescribed)
Stage 4: Very Severe	
Your breathing is difficult even at rest You may need oxygen most or all the time Your quality of life may be significantly affected	Comfort-focused or symptom-relief care Advanced care planning In-home support Hospice or palliative care for added comfort and support

Your COPD Care Team

Managing COPD involves many different people and skills. You may work with one or more of the following health care professionals:

Primary Care Provider: A doctor (Doctor of Medicine or Doctor of Osteopathy), physician assistant (PA), or nurse practitioner (NP). They diagnose COPD and help manage your care.

Pulmonologist: A lung specialist who can confirm your COPD diagnosis, often with a lung function test called spirometry.

Nurse (RN): Supports your care, medications, and checkups.

Respiratory Therapist (RT): Your Breathing Guide or specialist who provides education about COPD and teaches tools for effective management.

Physical Therapist: Helps strengthen your body or improve movement through exercise and physical methods to better manage COPD.

Care Coordinators: Assists with navigating different parts of the health care system and keeps communication flowing between you and your providers.

Nutrition Specialist (Dietitian): Helps you eat well, maintain a healthy weight, and make good food choices to support your health.

Feelings and Emotions Supporter (Mental Health Worker): Helps with stress, worry, sadness, and overall emotional well-being.

Family or Caregiver: An essential part of your team. Family and caregivers provide daily support, encouragement, and help you follow your COPD Action Plan.

Tips for Staying Connected to Your Care Team

- Keep a list of your providers and helpers, including their names, roles, and phone numbers.
- Use a notebook or ask a trusted person to help you keep track of important information.
- Write down your questions before any provider or support visits.
- Keep your appointments for check-ups and follow-ups.
- Keep an up-to-date COPD Action Plan for guidance on how to manage COPD (see page 12).
- Call your provider if your symptoms get worse.

COPD Action Plan

Your COPD Action Plan is a form you complete with your provider. Bring the blank form to your care team so they can help fill it out. The plan helps you track good and bad days, manage your medicines, and know what to do when symptoms change. Following your plan can help you act early and avoid an emergency room or hospital visit.

The COPD Action Plan is organized around three color zones:

● Green: Feeling okay

When you are in the green zone, you are likely:

- Taking your medications as prescribed
- Staying active with daily movement and exercise
- Eating healthy foods
- Keeping up with vaccines
- Avoiding things that make breathing harder, such as tobacco smoke, poor air quality, and your personal COPD triggers

● Yellow: Flare-up starting or worsening symptoms

COPD can usually be managed to keep your breathing and symptoms stable. Sometimes, symptoms may get worse or suddenly become severe – this is called a flare-up.

Your COPD Action Plan gives you clear steps from your health care provider on what to do when this happens, including changes to your medications or activities to help you recover. When you are in the Yellow Zone, contact your health care provider to see if you need any medication changes or other support.

● Red: Get help now

The Red Zone means your COPD has gotten much worse and you need help right away. It is important for you to ACT NOW to get help. Follow your Action Plan by:

- Taking your emergency medications as prescribed
- Calling 911 for immediate help

View and download the full COPD Action Plan on page 12.

Patient Name	Birthdate	Year Plan

COPD Action Plan

Signs and Steps to Manage Your COPD and Breathe Easier - Together

How to use this plan: Patients and health care providers should complete the COPD Action Plan together. First identify your zone and then with your provider identify actions to take according to your zone. Discuss what to do if things change, any challenges or barriers in following this plan, and the steps to take if your COPD worsens.

Know your zone – **Take the right action!**	**Provider instructions for zone action**
Green Zone: **“I’m doing okay”**	**What to do** if you are in the green zone:
You feel good when: • Breathing is normal for you • Usual cough and phlegm/mucus • Usual energy for activities and exercise • Sleep well at night • Good appetite	• Take daily medicines, as prescribed: ____________________ ____________________ • Use oxygen, CPAP, or other tools as directed: ____________________ ____________________ • Stay active and eat well • Stick to your plan!
Yellow Zone: **“Something’s Not Right”**	**What to do** if you are in the yellow zone:
Call your provider if you have: • More shortness of breath than usual • More coughing or thicker phlegm/ mucus • Less energy, poor sleep or appetite • Mild fever or just feel “off” • Using “rescue” inhaler more often	• Keep taking daily medications, as prescribed: ____________________ ____________________ • Start your “sick day” medications (ask provider if you are unsure): ____________________ ____________________ • Rest – take it easy until you feel better • Call your provider to report worsening symptoms; discuss need for an appointment, additional medication or action (take seriously)
Yellow Zone: **“Need Help Now”**	**ACT NOW:** If you are in the red zone, you may be having a **COPD EMERGENCY**
Call 911 or get help if: • Can’t breathe, even when resting • Coughing or mucus is much worse • Can’t walk or talk easily • Very tired or confused • Lips or nails turn grey or blue • Your hands, feet, or ankles are swollen • Chest pain • “Rescue” inhaler is not helping	• Take “emergency medications”, if available: ____________________ ____________________ **CALL 911. Do NOT Wait. Get help immediately.** A Red Zone flare-up can be life-threatening. **ACT NOW!**

Provider Name:	I reviewed the COPD Action Plan with the patient. Provider's Signature:
Provider Address:	Date Reviewed with Patient:
Provider's Phone Number:	Notes:
FOR YOU (THE PATIENT) TO FILL OUT: Please check below, sign and date to allow family members or other caregivers to talk with your provider.	
I give permission to [name]: __________________________, [relationship]: __________________________, to communicate with my healthcare provider to help me manage my COPD.	
Patient Signature:	Date Signed:
List a person/phone # who can drive you to an emergency room or help you during a COPD flare: Name: Phone #: Name: Phone #:	Other Important Contact: Name: Email: Phone:
PROPER DEVICE USE TIP: Watch a demonstration video on using your inhaler.	**VACCINATION TIP:** Staying up-to-date on vaccines (RSV, flu, pneumococcal, COVID-19) adds protection for your COPD management.
COPD ACTION PLAN TIP: Place a copy on your fridge and give one to your caregivers.	**GETTING HELP EARLY:** Take action as soon as you enter the yellow-zone. Call your provider to report symptoms.
TRIGGERS TIP: Eliminate or avoid personal triggers to help manage symptoms. Common triggers are: pets in bedroom and on furniture, scented products, including perfumes, air fragrance sprays, wood smoke, gas fumes, extreme cold and humid conditions, tobacco smoke, secondhand smoke, and other inhaled products **Visit 802Quits.org or call 1-800-QUIT NOW for free help to quit smoking or vaping.**	**SELF-MANAGEMENT TIP:** Stabilize your COPD by knowing the following: • COPD Basics, signs, symptoms and progression. • Medication and device use • Triggers • Daily Management, including your treatment and COPD Action Plans and what to do in an emergency.

Learn more about COPD:

Visit the Vermont Department of Health's COPD Program:
www.healthvermont.gov/wellness/copd-chronic-obstructive-pulmonary-disease

VERMONT
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Be Ready for Flare-Ups and Emergencies

A flare-up happens when your breathing suddenly gets worse. You might feel chest tightness, tiredness, and even fear.

- **Step 1: Check your COPD Action Plan.**
- **Step 2: Watch for These Signs:**
  - More coughing or mucus
  - Color changes to the mucus
  - Fever or chills
  - Low oxygen levels
  - Feeling very tired or confused
- **Step 3: Take Action:**
  - Follow your COPD Action Plan.
  - Use your rescue inhaler or nebulizer, as prescribed.
  - Call your provider if symptoms do not improve.
  - Go to the emergency room right away if you cannot catch your breath

When to Call Your Provider

Call your provider if you are in the yellow zone of your COPD Action Plan, especially if:

- You need your quick-relief (rescue) inhaler more often than usual
- You can't sleep because of breathing problems
- You feel dizzy or weak

Emergency Help in Rural Areas

If you live in a remote rural area, or far from a hospital, you are not alone and help is still within reach. Be prepared to take early action to get help. Here are some tips:

Be prepared:

- Keep your medical info by your phone, near the door or in your wallet if at risk of an emergency exacerbation or flare-up.
- Review the checklist below and have a pre-packed "to-go" bag for when you need to go to the hospital.
- Ask if someone can visit your home or call to check in

Getting Help:

- Call your primary care provider, nurse, or respiratory therapist
- Go to a nearby clinic or to urgent care center

If symptoms get worse and you feel like you cannot breathe, call 911 right away. Ambulances are equipped to help you while on your way to the hospital.

Living with COPD

Staying Healthy at Home

You can feel better by keeping your home clean and safe. Here are some ways to do that:

- Dust often using a damp cloth.
- Don’t use sprays or cleaners with fragrances or strong chemicals; choose third-party certified products (look for logos such as Green Seal, Safer Choice, or Design for the Environment).
- Let in fresh air when the weather is good.
- Use an air filter if you can.

DESIGN for the ENVIRONMENT
Meets U.S. EPA DfE Product Criteria™
epa.gov/dfe

SAFER CHOICE
Meets U.S. EPA Safer Product Standards™
epa.gov/saferchoice

GREEN SEAL™
greenseal.org

Keep Air Clean and Safe in Winter

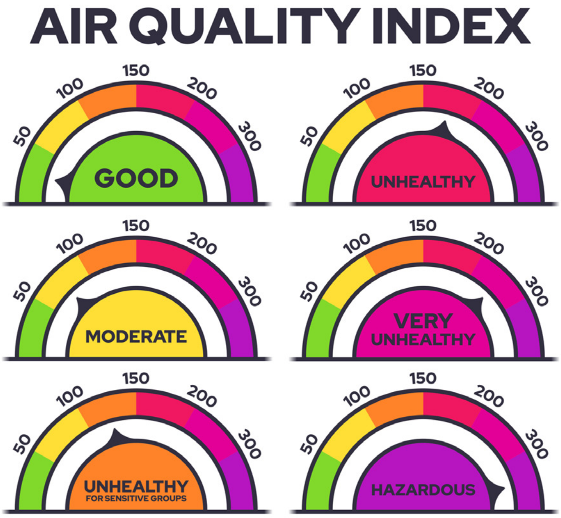
In Vermont, heating is necessary, but fuels and gases from heaters, and smoke from wood fires can trigger a COPD flare-up.

Tips for managing air quality and other challenges:

- Wood stoves or fireplaces—keep them clean and make sure smoke vents outside.
- Furnace fumes—avoid exposure to oil, gas, and other fuel vapors.
- Space heaters—do not block vents.
- Cold air—cover your mouth and nose with a scarf when outside.
- Outdoor air quality—check for alerts due to wildfires or other risks.

Extreme Weather Events and Air Quality

In recent years, Vermont has experienced flooding, wildfire smoke, extreme heat, and severe cold in winter. Each of these can make COPD harder to manage and may trigger dangerous flare-ups. Even seasonal changes, such as pollen and other allergens, can increase risks. During these times, be sure to check air quality and adjust your activities. Visit [AirNow.gov](https://www.airnow.gov) for current air quality readings and alerts in your area.



Things to Avoid with COPD

Certain things can make COPD symptoms worse. Avoid these triggers when possible:

- Tobacco use (smoking) and vaping
- Exposure to smoke (secondhand smoke)
- Mold
- Strong smells like paint, perfume, cleaning products with strong chemicals
- Indoor and outdoor air pollution (wildfire smoke, fireplaces, wood stoves, ozone, particle pollution, fumes, gases, industrial dusts)
- Occupational hazards (dusts, vapors, fumes, chemicals)
- Home exposures (heating fuels, wood stoves, carpet)
- Chronic respiratory illness

Eating and Drinking Well

Eating well is an important part of living with COPD. The right foods and habits can give you energy, help you breathe easier, and support your overall health.

Tips for eating and drinking with COPD:

- Eating well can help you breathe easier.
- Eat smaller meals. They put less pressure on your lungs.
- Sit up while you eat.
- Drink plenty of water. It helps thin mucus.
- Pick foods that give you energy but don’t make you feel too full.

Traveling and Going Out

Traveling and enjoying time outside the home is possible with COPD – it just takes a little extra planning. Preparing ahead helps you stay safe, comfortable, and confident while you’re on the go.

Tips for traveling and going out with COPD:

- Check the weather and air quality (use a weather app, or visit AirNow.gov).
- Pack your medicines and extra oxygen.
- Know where to get help if you need it.
- Avoid crowds if you’re sick.
- Bring a mask in smoky or dusty places.
- Don’t skip meals or medicine.

Support for You and Your Family

Coping with COPD

Living with COPD can be hard on both your body and your mind. It's normal to feel tired, frustrated, scared, sad, or worried about the future. You don't have to cope alone – support is available for you and your family.

Tips for coping with COPD:

- Talk to someone you trust (family member, friend, therapist, or pastor).
- Write down how you feel.
- Breathe slowly when you feel upset.
- Join a support group for people with COPD and their families.
- Stay connected with friends, faith, or community groups (available in-person or by phone–see for example My Healthy VT or American Lung Association included in the Resources on page 31).

Managing Worry, Anxiety, or Sadness

Feeling worried, anxious, or sad is normal when living with COPD. You may notice feeling:

- Nervous about your breathing
- Sad or down most of the time
- Like you don't enjoy things anymore
- Trouble sleeping or eating

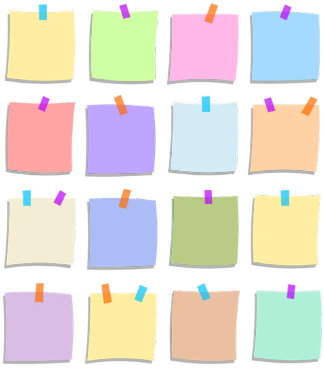
These feelings could be anxiety or depression – and ***they can be treated.***

Tips for managing worry, anxiety, and stress:

- Talking to a therapist or mental health worker
- Practicing breathing exercises
- Taking medicine, if your provider recommends it
- Getting support from others who have COPD

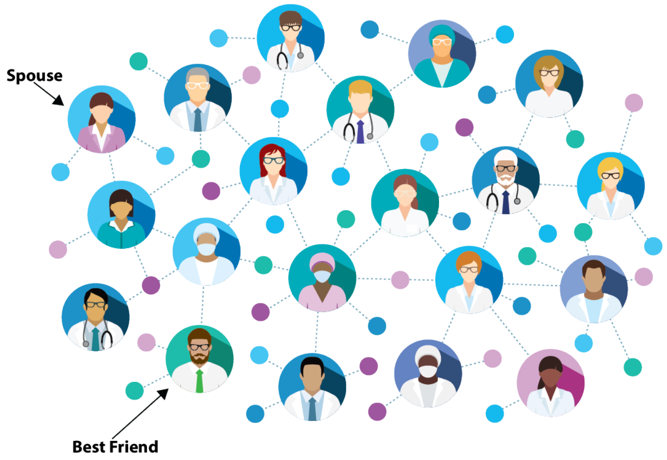
Try This: Notes to Self:

Write reminders, encouragement, or self-care tips on sticky notes or in a notebook. Create different notes for health goals, things to remember, or positive thoughts. Feeling creative? Add doodles or emojis to show how you're feeling. You can also keep these notes together on a bulletin board or in a dedicated notebook page so they're easy to review when you need encouragement.



Try This: My Circle of Support:

Draw your own Circle of Support and fill in the names, roles, and phone numbers of people who support you—including providers, family, friends and other types of support. You can also draw lines to connect people or use icons/images to show your network. Here's an example of a Circle of Support.



Try This: Support List:

You can also create a Support List using the template below:

Name:________________ Support Role: _____________ Phone #: _______________

Name:________________ Support Role: _____________ Phone #: _______________

Name:________________ Support Role: _____________ Phone #: _______________

Name:________________ Support Role: _____________ Phone #: _______________

Caregivers

COPD affects not only the person living with the disease but also the family members, friends, and professionals who provide care and support.

Caregivers often:

- Provide support around medicine, like getting refills and taking medicine as prescribed
- Help arrange appointments and transportation
- Provide ongoing help and encouragement
- Offer emotional support
- Help with household tasks
- Help call your care team when you have questions
- Go with you to appointments to listen and take notes

Support for Caregivers

Caregivers need help too—help those who help you!

Tip: Good coordination between patients and caregivers can make things go much smoother.

- Keep a shared calendar for appointments and medications
- Use a notebook or whiteboard to track medicines and symptoms so you and your caregiver stay on the same page.
- Have periodic check-in conversations to support each other in this valuable partnership.

Tips for Caregivers for Self-Care

- Take breaks when you can and rest.
- Share your feelings with others.
- Ask for help when you need it.
- Use support groups or resources for caregivers.

Advanced COPD – Planning Ahead

Advanced care planning is deciding how you want to be cared for if your COPD gets worse. Starting these conversations early can make a big difference later. They aren't always easy, but they can bring peace of mind to you and your loved ones.

Consider:

- What kind of care do you want in the future?
- Who should make decisions for you if you're unable to speak?
- What makes life meaningful to you?

Advanced Therapies

Some patients, as they continue through the stages of disease, will require more advanced therapies for COPD. There are many different options for treatment depending on each person's unique symptoms and situation, so be sure to work together with your provider to ensure treatment plans fit your needs.

- **Palliative Care:** These services can be helpful at any stage of COPD to support you and your family with treatment planning, surgery, stress, and navigating the medical system. This type of care focuses on improving the quality of life of a person living with serious illnesses, like COPD. Palliative Care also helps manage pain, breathing difficulty, and emotional stress.
- **Hospice:** These services focus on comfort and quality of life, rather than trying to cure or treat an illness. Many people find it helpful to talk about their life goals or "bucket list" items during this time, so they can focus on what truly matters. Remember: "Hospice isn't giving up. It's choosing comfort, dignity, and support."

Advance Directives

In simple words, an advance directive is a document that lets you say:

- Who will make decisions for you if you are unable to speak for yourself
- What types of medical care do you want—or don't want— in the future

Who Can Help with Advance Directives?

- Your health care provider or nurse
- A social worker
- A lawyer or legal aid service
- Hospice or palliative care teams

Having an Advance Directive helps make sure your wishes are known and respected.

Key Tools and Checklists for Your Health

This section is designed to help you stay organized, confident, and ready for whatever comes your way. Inside, you'll find:

- Tools to track your medications, refill schedules, symptoms, and quality of life
- Checklists for what to bring to appointments, who to call in different situations, and how to prepare for appointments and daily routines
- Home emergency resources
- A place to gather important contact information, including who to call in an emergency
- Space to write your own notes of encouragement and reminders

COPD Action Plan: Your COPD Action Plan is one of the most important tools in your toolbox. It's a personalized roadmap from your health care provider that helps you:

- Monitor your own symptoms each day
- Know what steps to take if your condition gets worse
- Decide when to call your provider or seek emergency care

Having a COPD Action Plan helps you manage your COPD and respond quickly to changes in your health. Download a PDF of the COPD Action Plan on page 12.

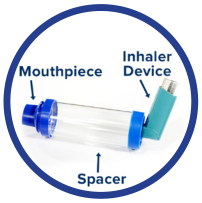
Medications and Devices – COPD medications come in several forms, including inhalers, nebulizers, and pills. Understanding how each one works is important for getting the most benefit.

- **Inhalers:** Most COPD medications are delivered through inhalers. These come in different styles, so it's important to know how to use the one you've been prescribed.
- **Nebulizers:** You may be prescribed a nebulizer, a machine that turns liquid medicine into a mist you can breathe in more easily.
- **Pills and Capsules:** Some medications come in pill form—but not all capsules are meant to be swallowed.
  - **Important:** Some capsules, like Spiriva, go into a special inhaler or nebulizer and should not be swallowed. Always check how your medication is meant to be used.

Be sure you know how to properly use every device and medication you're prescribed. This helps ensure you get full benefit of your treatment.

Inhalers – Inhalers deliver medicine directly to your lungs, making it easier to breathe. There are different types of inhalers and knowing how to use yours correctly is essential.

- **Types of inhalers:**
  - Some require you to inhale deeply or take a puff to draw in the medication.
  - Others are breath-activated, which means the device releases the medication automatically when you breathe in.
  - Many require you to shake the inhaler first to mix the medication properly.
- **Using your inhaler:**
  - Always read the instructions that come with your inhaler.
  - Show your provider how you use it to make sure you're doing it correctly.
  - You can also watch a video specific to your inhaler type for extra guidance.
- **Medication counters:**
  - Most inhalers have a small counter on the top or back to show how many doses are left.
  - Refill your prescription at least one week before you reach zero.
  - **Important:** If your inhaler makes a spritz after the counter hits zero, it no longer contains medicine.



Spacer – A spacer is a device used with an inhaler. It helps you breathe in all the medicine and allows more medicine to reach your lungs.

Nebulizer Machine – A nebulizer turns liquid medicine into a fine mist that you can breathe in through a mouthpiece or mask. This method may feel easier than using an inhaler, especially if you have trouble taking deep breaths.

Tips for Safe and Effective Use:

- Learn how to properly set up and clean your machine.
- If your nebulizer uses capsules or vials, follow the instructions carefully to load the medication correctly.
- Do **NOT** swallow capsules made for nebulizers – they are meant to be inhaled through the machine.

Ask your provider or pharmacist to walk you through the steps or show you a demonstration video if you're unsure.

Oxygen – Oxygen therapy provides supplemental oxygen for people with low blood oxygen levels. This concentrated oxygen requires a prescription and may be delivered through a tank, portable device, or oxygen concentrator.

Key Reminders:

- Follow your provider's instructions for how and when to use your oxygen.
- Monitor your supply and keep track of your refill schedule.
- Check the regulator or gauge regularly so you know when your tank is running low.
- Be aware of any expiration dates or equipment maintenance needs.

Always use oxygen equipment safely and store it properly to reduce the risk of fire or injury.

Home Ventilator – A home ventilator helps support your breathing by reducing the work your lungs need to do. It assists with airflow and allows your respiratory muscles to rest, making it easier to breathe especially during flare-ups or at night.

Your care team will show you how to use and maintain the machine safely at home.

Pulse Oximeter – A pulse oximeter is a small device that clips onto your finger to measure your blood oxygen level (SpO_2) and pulse rate.

You can use it to:

- Track and record your oxygen levels throughout the day
- See how your levels change with different activities or at rest
- Monitor trends to help manage your COPD more effectively

Talk with your provider to learn:

- What your target oxygen saturation range should be
- What to do if your readings fall outside that range

Keeping regular records can help you and your care team make informed decisions about your treatment.

"Huff Coughing" Devices – These devices help loosen and clear mucus (sputum) from your lungs by supporting the coughing process. (This example is manufactured by Smiths Medical devices).

Walking Aid – A walking aid, like a cane or walker, helps you move safely while reducing fatigue. It provides support and stability, making it easier to stay active and maintain your balance.

COPD Notebook or Journal – Use a notebook or journal to:

- Track your symptoms and medication times
- Write down questions to ask your health care provider
- Keep a list of important contacts
- Jot down thoughts or even doodle to lift your spirits

It's a simple tool to help you stay organized and feel more in control of your health.

Additional Tools to Help Manage COPD and Feel Better

- **Air Purifier -** Helps reduce indoor allergens, dust, and pollutants that can irritate your lungs.
- **Humidifier -** Adds moisture to dry air, which can ease coughing and breathing discomfort.
- **Breathing Exercise Apps or Videos -** Guided exercises like pursed-lip breathing or diaphragmatic breathing can improve lung function and reduce breathlessness.
- **Portable Fan -** A small fan can help ease shortness of breath by blowing cool air on your face.
- **Comfortable Seating with Good Back Support -** Helps you rest better and reduces strain when sitting or doing activities.
- **Medication Organizer or Pill Box -** Keeps your medications sorted and helps you remember when to take them.
- **Emergency Alert System or Medical ID Bracelet -** Provides peace of mind that help can be called quickly if needed.
- **Support Group Information -** Connecting with others who have COPD can provide emotional support and helpful tips.

What Tools are in Your Personal Toolbox?

What Tools are in Your Personal Toolbox? Write in your personal tools in the spaces below, including the name and phone # of a caregiver or provider. An example is shown.

COPD Action Plan

Emergency Tools to Have at Home

- **Rescue Inhaler –** Avoid gaps in your rescue medication refills; check the counter and expiration date regularly.
- **Backup Oxygen Supply –** Keep a backup supply if you qualify,
- **Written COPD Action Plan –** Revise your COPD Action Plan every 12 months or every time you have a significant change in your plan. Post a copy on your fridge and share it with a family member.

Tracking Medications, Devices and Refills

Medications	Devices (describe or mark with a colored dot)	Times to Take	Refill Reminder (Date for next Refill)	Notes
Rescue 1. 2.	**Rescue** 1. 2.			
Daily Controller 1. 2.	**Daily Controller** 1. 2.			
Nebulizer 1. 2.	**Nebulizer** 1. 2.			
Oxygen 1. 2.	**Oxygen** 1. 2.			
Other 1. 2.	**Other** 1. 2.			

Tracking Symptoms and Quality of Life

Week # of month/year:

Symptoms or Quality of Life Issues	Day							Days/Times in the Yellow Zone	Days/Times in the Red Zone	Triggers or Contributing Factors	COPD Action Plan Steps Taken	Notes
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7					
Temperature												
Cough												
Phlegm												
Chest tightness												
Difficulty breathing during normal activities												
Sleep disturbances caused by coughing												
Other:												
Other:												
Other:												

Other Tools

Tool #1: Oxygen Tracker

What is my target oxygen saturation level as recommended by my doctor? ______%:

Date: _______ Oxygen: _______%

Date: _______ Oxygen: _______%

Date: _______ Oxygen: _______%

Date: _______ Oxygen: _______%

Tool #2: Checklist for your next provider's appointment

- ☐ What should my oxygen levels be: ____________________________________
- ☐ Can I have an emergency prescription for when I get sick?
  - ☐ Name of Medication and dose: _________________________________
  - ☐ Name of Medication and dose: _________________________________
- ☐ Results of last lung function tests: ____________________________________
- ☐ Fill out COPD action plan
- ☐ Discuss Pulmonary Rehab
- ☐ Discuss Vaccinations
- ☐ Review diet and exercise recommendations
- ☐ Ask about help with advanced directives if needed

Tool #3: Quality of Life Checklist

- ☐ I take my medications
- ☐ I can get dressed without much trouble breathing
- ☐ I can go for a short walk
- ☐ I can eat small nutritious meals
- ☐ I can take care of most of my household chores
- ☐ I can sleep well at night

Tool #4: Emergency Contacts and Hospital Checklist

Part 1: Who to Call in an Emergency

- ☐ Primary Care Dr: ______________________ Phone Number: ______________________
- ☐ Lung Dr: ______________________________ Phone Number: ______________________
- ☐ Emergency Contact: ___________________ Phone Number: ______________________
- ☐ 9-1-1

Part 2: Emergency Contact List

Keep a list of other emergency contacts and put it in a handy place for quick access. You can build your own base on this example:

Name:____________________ Relationship/Role: __________________Phone #: ____________________

Name:____________________ Relationship/Role: __________________Phone #: ____________________

Name:____________________ Relationship/Role: __________________Phone #: ____________________

Part 2: What to Take with You to the Hospital

- ☐ CPAP or BiPAP machine
- ☐ Medications or a list of medications
- ☐ The phone number of someone you want to know that you are in the hospital.
- ☐ Cell Phone and charger
- ☐ Advance Directive information

Resources

802quits.org

AirNow.gov

lung.org

myhealthyvt.org

vtfoodbank.org

myplate.gov

Healthvermont.gov/copd

Healthvermont.gov/tobacco