

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease in over 16s: diagnosis and management

Information for the public
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Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease: the care you should expect

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or COPD, is a condition that makes breathing difficult. It covers more than 1 lung condition, including chronic bronchitis and emphysema. About 1.2 million people in the UK have a diagnosis of COPD but many more have it without knowing. Most people find out they have COPD in their fifties or older, and it's much more common in people who smoke. Breathing problems tend to get gradually worse over time, but there are many different medicines and therapies that can help people keep these under control for longer.

We want this guideline to make a difference to people with COPD and their families by making sure:

- doctors have the latest advice about which medicines (and combinations of medicines) are effective so they can offer the best treatments
- your doctor helps you make a self-management plan that looks at your life as a whole and helps you improve your health
- your self-management plan includes a flare-up 'action plan' that covers how to prevent flare-ups and what to do when you get one
- you don't use oxygen therapy if you smoke, because the risk of fires and burns outweighs its benefits – instead you should first get support to help you quit smoking.

Making decisions together

Decisions about treatment and care are best when they are made together. Your healthcare professionals should give you clear information, talk with you about your options and listen carefully to your views and concerns. They should also:

- make sure you understand how, and when, to use any medicines and inhalers you have been given
- explain the reasons for any changes to your normal medicines and encourage you to come back for advice if you don't feel they are helping
- review your medicines and your self-management plan at every check-up and discuss any worries you have.

If you can't understand the information you are given, tell your healthcare professional.

Read more about [making decisions about your care](#).

In the news

Read NICE news about how this guideline will help.

Antibiotics should be restricted for COPD



Healthcare professionals should consider the risk of antimicrobial resistance when deciding whether antibiotics are needed for treating or preventing a flare up of symptoms of COPD.

[See what NICE says](#)

Where can I find out more?

The [NHS website](#) has more information about COPD. You can find advice on quitting smoking at [NHS Smokefree](#) (0300 123 1044).

The organisation below can give you more advice and support.

- [British Lung Foundation](#), 03000 030 555

NICE is not responsible for the content of these websites.

To share an experience of care you have received, contact your local [Healthwatch](#).

We wrote this guideline with people who have been affected by COPD and staff who treat and support them. All the decisions are based on the best research available.

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