



COPD PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET



Q: What is COPD?

COPD stands for Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease. This is a term used for a number of conditions including bronchitis and emphysema.

COPD leads to damaged airways in the lungs, causing them to narrow. This makes it harder to get air in and out of the lungs.

The word “Chronic” means that the problem is long term.

Q. What causes COPD?

The most common cause of COPD is smoking. Once you give up smoking you gradually reduce the chances of getting COPD – and you slow down its progress if you already have it.

Other factors include:

- Occupational factors e.g. coal dust, asbestos exposure
- Inherited chest and lung problems

Q.Signs and Symptoms of COPD?

- Coughing
- Shortness of Breath
- Phlegm Production

Some people may only notice their symptoms in winter, or they might put it down to a “smokers” cough.

Q: How is COPD Diagnosed?

Your GP may diagnose COPD based on your medical history, a physical examination and results from tests.

At time of diagnosis you may have had:

A spirometry breathing test (usually done by the Nurse, your appointment will be approximately 40 minutes). The nurse will ask you to blow several times into the mouthpiece of the machine. This will indicate if your airways are narrowed.

Q. What can I expect at the practice?

You will be invited to come along and see the COPD nurse on a yearly basis. Your appointment Will last approximately 20 minutes.

- You will also be asked to bring along your COPD medications e.g. your inhalers and any other medications you have for your COPD
- The nurse will check your inhalers and how you are using them. If you are experiencing any problems with the devices the nurse can advise on this
- The nurse will also ask various questions about your daily lifestyle and how your COPD affects this
- Other things that will be discussed are smoking status and cessation advice if appropriate
- Your blood pressure will be checked and other lifestyle questions discussed
- Discussion between the nurse and the GP will take place at this time if any medications need reviewed or changed.
- The nurse will also discuss an individualised self-management plan which will be your guide to assist you manage your condition at home.

Q.What can I do to help control my COPD?

COPD cannot be cured once you have it, but treatments may help.

For most people stopping smoking reduces the risks and slows down the progression of the disease.

- Diet – look after your weight, eat a balanced diet and try to keep as mobile as you can
- Use Medications as directed and commence on steroid and antibiotic medication as soon as symptoms occur if this has been prescribed for you
- Flu Vaccination – a flu vaccination annually is also recommended as flu can exacerbate your symptoms
- Pneumonia vaccine (once only) for protection
- Avoid activities that may make your COPD worse
- Attend your reviews when invited by the Practice



Q. Where can I find more information?

Please feel free to ask your GP or nurse if you have any questions.

There are also a number of helpful resources:

British Lung Foundation

www.lunguk.org

British Lung Foundation Help and Advice Line:

08458 5050 20

(Monday – Friday 10.00am – 6.00pm)

About.com COPD

www.copd.about.com



PRACTICE CONTACT DETAILS

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