

COPD Stay Well Action Plan

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<http://www.BreathingBetterLivingWell.com>

The key to staying as healthy as possible with COPD, or any other chronic lung disease, is watching for early warning signs of acute exacerbation (an episode when your breathing gets worse and you are ill), and taking action! If you catch early warning signs and work in partnership with your doctor, you have a much better chance at stopping an infection in its tracks, so you can stay well and get on with living.

Develop an action plan with your doctor

Make an appointment if you don't have one coming up soon. At this appointment, show your doctor the list below and ask:

- Which early warning signs do you want to know about when I notice them?
- Are there other early warning signs that I should watch for?
- When do you want me to call you?
- When I call your office, how will your staff know that I'm more likely than many of your other patients to get really sick?

Know what to watch for

Knowing early warning signs cannot only help you stay healthy, at home and independent, but it can even save your life! Here are some early warning signs of acute exacerbation for people with COPD.

- A change in your cough. Are you coughing more, less, or is it different than usual?
- A change in the amount, color, or texture of your sputum (Yes, you should be looking at it!). Is it yellow, green, or bloody? Is it thick or sticky? Your mucous should be thin and clear or white.
- If you have a pulse oximeter at home, are your O₂ sats (oxygen saturations) lower than usual?
- Sudden weight gain such as 3-5 lbs. overnight
- Swelling in your ankles or feet. Here's a tip: Gently press the tip of your finger into the skin around your ankles and feet. Does it leave a dent? It shouldn't. If it does, call your doctor.

- Morning dizziness, confusion, or headache that doesn't go away with medications such as Tylenol or Advil.
- A heart rate faster than usual (60-100 is normal with each person having their own "normal"). Know your normal resting heart rate.
- Your urine should be pale yellow and clear, with no odor. If it is darker or cloudy, or with a foul odor, you might have a urinary tract infection.
- Fever
- Unusual fatigue
- Joint or muscle aches

If you are unable to speak more than two or three words without taking a breath, or if there is a bluish / gray color on your fingertips or lips, call 911!

My COPD Action Plan

My doctor: _____

Office phone number: _____