

Step-by step guide for worsening symptoms

Step 1

Increase use of your reliever (normally BLUE) inhaler
(If you have a spacer, use it as it helps you get more drug to your lungs)
Use up to a maximum of 4 puffs every 4 hours (1 puff every 30 seconds if with MDI inhaler)

Step 2

If your breathlessness is **much worse** than usual and affecting your normal activities then start taking your prednisolone (steroid) tablets.

PREDNISOLONE 5mg (steroid) tablets

Take 6 tablets on **DAY 1** when your symptoms start then take 6 tablets every morning with food daily for 6 more days
Please complete the full 7 day course

Step 3

AND if you get any of the following:

- Coughing up green/yellow sputum (phlegm).
- More sputum than usual.
- The sputum is thicker, stickier or tastes different.

Start taking your antibiotic as well **EITHER**

Doxycycline 2 capsules on DAY 1 with food then 1 capsule daily for 4 more days

Please complete the full 5 day course

OR

Amoxicillin 500mg Capsules

Take 1 capsule 3 times a day for 5 days

Please complete the full 5 day course

Step 4

Following a flare up you must arrange a follow up with your practice nurse or GP to ensure you are getting better, are on the correct medication, check your inhaler technique, and have the flare up recorded in your notes. You should be reviewed before asking for a replacement Rescue pack to ensure it is still appropriate.

EMERGENCY

At any time if your symptoms get worse, despite increasing the use of your blue inhaler, (i.e. you're not getting better), please contact your doctor/nurse for an urgent appointment or dial 111 for advice out of hours.

Keep taking all your regular medication.

If you have any of the following:

- Very short of breath
- Chest pains
- High fever
- Feeling of drowsiness or confusion

DIAL 999 AMBULANCE



Take all your medicines with you to the hospital

How to help your lungs:

- It is beneficial to stop smoking. Ask your doctor/nurse/pharmacist for help.
- Take your medication/inhalers the way you've agreed with your doctor / nurse / pharmacist and check you're getting the best from your inhalers.
- Try to keep as active as possible - your armchair is your enemy.
- Get a balance between activity and rest.
- Maintain a sensible weight and diet, ask your nurse for advice.
- Whenever possible, avoid situations which make your symptoms worse.
- Develop coping strategies to help avoid stressful situations. Discuss with doctor or nurse
- Have an annual flu jab.
- Have your pneumococcal jab.
- Keep well hydrated unless instructed otherwise

Self management of worsening symptoms of COPD (flare up / exacerbation)

What is a Flare Up?

A “**flare up**” or **exacerbation** is a worsening of symptoms such as increased breathlessness, cough and/or sputum and wheeze that is more than your normal day to day variations.

What causes a flare up?

Not all flare ups are caused by bacterial infections as other triggers such as air pollution, changes in weather, viruses and stress can also cause them. Therefore antibiotics are not always necessary. Please see step-by step guide inside of what to do and ask your nurse/doctor if you are unsure.

GP Surgery:

Main contact:

British Lung Foundation Help Line: 03000 030 555
Website: <http://www.blf.org.uk>

Contact NHS 111: 24hrs or if GP Surgery is closed.