

Preventing COPD Flare-ups

A flare-up is when your symptoms get worse. Your doctor may use the term “exacerbation” to describe a flare-up.

Flare-ups may be caused by:

- Smoking or exposure to smoke from other smokers
- Airway infections
- Pollutants (like dust or chemicals)



Prevent flare-ups, as they may lead to loss of lung function

- Get treatment right away if you have a flare-up

Protect yourself from airway infections

- Ask your doctor if you need vaccines (shots) to help prevent flu or pneumonia
- Stay away from friends or coworkers who have colds or the flu

Education can help prevent flare-ups

The goal is to help you better manage your COPD. This is done by:

- Learning about your disease
- Learning how to breathe properly
- Taking medicines as directed
- Using equipment correctly (if you use any equipment to help with your breathing)
- Learning which exercises will help you feel better

Be aware of your breathing

- Watch for symptoms like more shortness of breath, wheezing, or coughing than usual. Look for a change in the color of your mucus
- Tell your doctor if new symptoms appear
- Ask your doctor how you can prevent a flare-up
- Ask your doctor what to do if you have a flare-up
- If your symptoms change, seek treatment quickly

Taking care of yourself can help prevent COPD flare-ups.