

# What to do if you have a **COPD flare up**

## What is a COPD flare up?

- ▶ **COPD flare ups** (exacerbations) are frightening and debilitating. You will feel very tired and short of breath, even when just standing up or moving slightly.
- ▶ Your cough may get worse and you may produce more sputum that is discoloured and difficult to cough up.
- ▶ The impact on your body can cause a severe infection. **Early treatment can reduce your chance of going to hospital.**

## What do I do if a flare up happens?

- ▶ **DO NOT STOP YOUR INHALERS:** It is important that you get as much from your inhalers into your lungs as possible.
- ▶ **USE A SPACER:** This will have been prescribed to you with your **blue reliever** inhaler. Use it often throughout the day until your breathing improves, to open up your airways and help you breathe more easily.
- ▶ **SEND OFF A SPUTUM SAMPLE:** If you are coughing up a lot more sputum or it is heavily discoloured (cough some onto a white tissue to inspect its colour). This is a sign of an infection.
- ▶ **START YOUR COURSE OF ORAL STEROIDS (Prednisolone 30mg every day for 10 days):** If your **breathlessness is much worse than usual.**
- ▶ **START YOUR ANTIBIOTICS:** Use them as instructed by your GP (this will be written on the label) once you have obtained your sputum sample.
- ▶ **RING YOUR SURGERY:**
  - To leave a message for your GP or Nurse to inform them that you are starting Oral Steroids and/or Antibiotics.
  - To contact your GP within 48 hours if you have not improved.
  - To book an appointment to see the Nurse for review in 10 days time, to check that you are improving.
  - To order any more inhalers if you need them for the next 10 days.
  - To re-issue prescriptions for back up medication and sputums pots for next time you have a flare up.

# Top tips for keeping well

- ▶ Stay indoors and keep warm.
- ▶ Keep the rooms you are in well ventilated.
- ▶ Eat well and drink plenty of fluids and warm drinks.
- ▶ Try to keep moving and mobile around your home.
- ▶ It may help to sleep with more pillows.
- ▶ Try to cough up as much phlegm off your chest regularly.
- ▶ Stop smoking.
- ▶ Keep taking your inhalers and usual medication.
- ▶ Follow the above instructions.

**IF YOU ARE CONCERNED OR WORRIED AND FEEL YOU ARE NOT MAKING ANY SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT CONTACT YOUR GP.**



## If you experience any of the following **CALL 999:**

Severe difficulty in breathing.

Feeling drowsy/confused.

Acute chest pains.

Feeling extremely agitated.

High fever.

Loss of consciousness.