

# Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease Action Plan

This **action plan** is a guide to help you manage the signs and symptoms of COPD. You and your provider should complete this plan together at your next visit. The three colors (zones), green, yellow and red, help you decide what to do.

| Zone          | Status   | Symptoms  | Actions   |
|---------------|--|---|---|
| <b>GREEN</b>  | <p><b>Green means you are doing well. Symptoms are STABLE.</b></p> <p>Your COPD is well controlled.</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>no increase in symptoms of cough, wheezing or shortness of breath</li> <li>may tire easily, but no more than usual</li> <li>can participate in your usual activities</li> <li>are having a regular day</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take medications as directed.</li> <li>Follow your treatment plan.</li> <li>Enjoy your usual activities.</li> <li>Follow your exercise program as directed.</li> <li>Maintain adequate nutrition and hydration.</li> <li>If you still smoke, plan to quit.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>YELLOW</b> | <p><b>Yellow means CAUTION.</b></p> <p>Your symptoms indicate you may need to talk with your provider.</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>an increase in sputum and/or the color has changed</li> <li>cannot complete usual activities without resting</li> <li>more tired and/or have an increase in coughing, wheezing or shortness of breath</li> <li>more difficulty sleeping due to COPD symptoms</li> </ul>  | <p>Continue your current medications and ADD your rescue or as needed inhalers as directed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If on oxygen, check the amount you are using.</li> <li>Pace your activities and use relaxation techniques.</li> <li>Maintain posture, which improves breathing.</li> <li>Keep hydrated.</li> <li>Watch for signs of infection, such as fever or increase in aches and pains.</li> <li>If symptoms persist for more than ____ hours, call your provider.</li> </ul> |
| <b>RED</b>    | <p><b>Red means you may need help IMMEDIATELY! Symptoms are unstable.</b></p> <p>You need to be evaluated now if your yellow zone actions have not helped your symptoms improve.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>difficulty in speaking or slurred speech</li> <li>sudden increase in shortness of breath not relieved by medications</li> <li>grayish skin color or blue lips/finger tips</li> <li>increased or irregular heartbeat</li> <li>feeling dizzy, faint or sudden increase in anxiety</li> <li>having any yellow zone symptoms for more than 48 hours</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Call your provider</li> </ul> <p>This is a medical emergency. If appropriate, call <b>911</b>. If you do not call 911, have someone drive you to the Emergency Room. Do not try to treat yourself or wait to see if symptoms improve.</p>  |

# Lower Your Risk of COPD Complications

Communicating with your provider and knowing what is normal for you is important for successful self-management.

## Know Your Baseline Symptoms

### Cough

Coughing is common with COPD and may occur at rest or with exertion. Be aware of how often you cough and what triggers your coughing. Your normal coughing pattern is your baseline or green zone symptom for cough. If you experience an increase in cough, an increase in sputum or the color has changed, a call or visit to your provider may be needed.

My baseline for cough is

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### Fatigue

Individuals with COPD can have a decrease in energy or become fatigued with certain activities, like walking or climbing stairs, and may need to take a nap during the day. If you experience fatigue more frequently, a call or visit to your provider may be needed.

My baseline activity level for fatigue is

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### Shortness of breath

Shortness of breath may occur during rest or with exertion. Record how far you can walk, climb stairs or perform an activity before you notice being short of breath. If you experience worsening shortness of breath, especially if you are not able to speak a full sentence or walk across the room, or you experience more frequent symptoms, a call or visit to your provider may be needed.

My baseline activity level for shortness of breath is

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### Wheezing

Wheezing is a whistling noise heard when exhaling and is a common symptom of COPD. It may occur at rest or with exertion. Be aware of how much and how often you wheeze on a regular basis. If you experience worsening wheezing, a call or visit to your provider may be needed.

My baseline for wheezing is

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## Managing My COPD

### Get vaccinations

Help prevent illness with a flu shot every year and a pneumonia vaccine every 5–10 years, or as recommended by your provider.

### Get rest

Often, individuals with COPD have problems sleeping well. If you fall asleep during the day, wake up with headaches, snore, or feel tired all day long, let your provider know.

### Stay healthy

Individuals with COPD have difficulty with colds and the flu. Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.

### Stay hydrated

Drink six to eight glasses of water each day. This will help thin the mucus in your airways, making coughs more productive.

## Improving My COPD

### Stop smoking

The best way to keep COPD from starting or from getting worse is to not smoke. Talk with your provider about which quitting methods are right for you.

### Exercise

Gradual increases in intensity, frequency and duration of an activity over time can help you improve your breathing and overall health.

### Take medications

Follow your provider's directions for taking medications. Let him or her know if symptoms persist or if there is no improvement.

### Practice breathing

Pursed lip and diaphragm breathing exercises can help when breathing easily becomes difficult. Practice these techniques daily.