



What you need to know about...

Treating Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

How is COPD treated?

COPD treatment consists of medication and non-medication therapies.

Medications are used to:

- Prevent and control symptoms
- Reduce the frequency and severity of exacerbations (a worsening of symptoms)
- Improve health status
- Improve exercise status

Since COPD is usually progressive, regular treatment options should be ongoing unless significant side effects occur.

Medication plans are introduced based on the level of severity and symptoms, and should be developed specifically for each person.

The following classes of medications are commonly used in treating COPD. The choice within each class depends on the availability of medication and the individual's response.

Bronchodilators (inhaled and oral) – Used to help relax tight muscles around the airways. They are taken either on an as-needed basis for relief of symptoms, or on a regular basis to prevent or reduce symptoms.

Example: Fast- or Long-acting beta-2 agonists, Anticholinergics, Methylxanthines,

and/or combination bronchodilator therapy.



Glucocorticosteroids (inhaled and oral) – Used to help reduce the frequency of exacerbations. They are recommended for patients with more advanced COPD and repeated exacerbations.

Example: Inhaled, short-term oral, and combination glucocorticosteroid-bronchodilator therapy.



Other – Flu and pneumonia vaccines, antibiotics for infectious exacerbations, alpha-1 antitrypsin augmentation therapy for those with emphysema related to alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency.

