

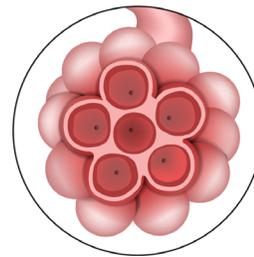
Medications for COPD

There are many medications available that can help improve your chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) symptoms. Let's learn more about the different types of COPD medications and how to use them properly.

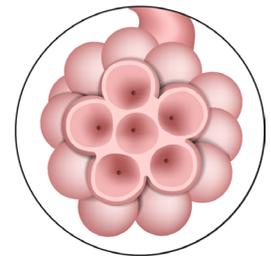
Medications for Daily Use

Long-acting medications are used every day to help prevent your COPD symptoms. These medications do not work quickly. Often, you need to take long-acting medications for several days or weeks before noticing a change in symptoms. These medications can include:

- **Inhaled Corticosteroids:** These are medications that help to reduce inflammation and swelling in your lungs. They decrease your risk of a flare-up, but you will not notice a change right away.
- **Long-Acting Bronchodilators:** These medications help open up your airways over a longer period of time. They do not work immediately and should not be used for quick relief of COPD symptoms. These medications are used once or twice daily, every day. **Do not stop your long-acting medications when you feel well.**



Inflamed Air Sac
in Airway



Healthy Air Sac
in Airway



Medications for Flare-Ups (Exacerbations)

A COPD flare-up (exacerbation) occurs when your symptoms become worse suddenly, and you become sick. It's important not to delay starting rescue medications when a flare-up occurs.

If you are having more shortness of breath and coughing than usual (COPD Action Plan **yellow zone**) or experiencing wheezing or chest tightness at rest (COPD Action Plan **red zone**), start taking the medications in your COPD Rescue Pack immediately.

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*An advanced practice provider is defined as a nurse practitioner or physician assistant.

Medications for COPD

Short-Acting Medications

Short-acting medications work quickly to help relieve your COPD symptoms. Common short-acting medications—the ones you use when you need quick relief—include short-acting bronchodilators like albuterol or levalbuterol. These are medications that relax the muscles around the lungs' breathing tubes. They help you to breathe easier and reduce your coughing.



Oral Corticosteroids

Oral corticosteroids are medications that reduce swelling in the breathing tubes of the lungs. This helps make breathing easier. Oral corticosteroids, like Prednisone, are pills or tablets that are taken by mouth. These are not the same type of steroids that some athletes take to give them bigger muscles. These medications are only used for a short time during a COPD flare-up.

Antibiotics

COPD flare-ups are often caused by infections in your lungs. Your primary care provider may give you antibiotics to treat the infection such as amoxicillin, azithromycin, doxycycline, or levofloxacin. These antibiotics only work on lung infections caused by bacteria, such as bronchitis and pneumonia. These infections can make your COPD much worse.



It is important to remember to keep all of your medications refilled and to follow your medication schedule as directed by your primary care provider. If you are having trouble affording your medication, talk to your doctor, APP, care manager, or pharmacist.

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