

COPD

Empire BlueCross BlueShield HealthPlus has a care management program for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). This program will help you better understand and manage your COPD. We can assist you to set health goals and create a care plan that fits your lifestyle. You do not have to join the program. You are enrolled as a member of Empire.

Living with COPD

COPD is a group of long-term lung diseases in which the airways become narrowed and makes it hard to breathe. But it doesn't have to slow you down.

You can learn simple steps that can help you stop smoking, breathe easier and improve your quality of life. We will keep your doctor informed of your condition and the services we provide you. Your case manager can help you learn how to better manage your COPD.

Things to know

- Risk factors are things you may be exposed to at home, work or school that can cause a flare-up of symptoms. Some of these risk factors are tobacco smoke, wood burning stoves or fireplaces, chemicals, dust or fumes.
- The flu, bronchitis or a cold can make your COPD symptoms worse. Other health conditions can make it harder for you to control your COPD.
- We can give you more information to help you manage your COPD.
- Your doctor may want to do testing to see how your COPD is doing.

Tips to monitor your COPD:

- Use a COPD action or management plan
A COPD action plan is written information from your doctor that tells you how to manage your COPD, such as:
 1. Things for you to do every day to treat your COPD.
 2. What to do if you are sick or your COPD symptoms are worse.
 3. When to start taking some medicines if you are having more symptoms than usual.
 4. Know when to call your doctor and when to get help right away.
- Know the signs and symptoms that your COPD is getting worse
Signs that your COPD is getting worse include:
 1. Harder to catch your breath
 2. Less energy
 3. A change in color or thickness of phlegm or mucus
 4. More coughing

5. Taking quick relief medicines more often
6. Medicine not helping
7. You may have other signs

How to take your COPD medications:

- What kind of COPD medicines are you taking?
 1. Quick relief medicines — help you if you have a COPD flare-up or sudden problem breathing. This kind of medicine usually does not last very long. It does not prevent you from having a COPD flare-up.
 2. Long-term medicines — this medicine does not work right away and is used to help your everyday COPD symptoms. It will not help you to breathe if you are having a COPD flare-up.
 3. It is very important to take your medicines just like your doctor tells you, even if you are feeling better.
- We can help you know how to take your medications the right way.
- We can help you to use inhalers, spacers, nebulizers and other devices.
- We can help you understand how your medications work.

Ways you can improve or manage your COPD:

- Quit smoking. Quitting smoking can make the biggest improvement in controlling your COPD. We have programs, and there are medications that can assist you in stopping smoking.
- Make short and long-term goals. We can help you make goals to eat better, exercise and maintain a healthy weight. Goals can be made to fit your lifestyle. We can assist you to make healthy changes one small step at a time to improve your COPD.
- Get a flu shot every year. Ask your doctor if you should have the pneumonia vaccine.

Support to help you manage your COPD:

- We can help you talk to your family or caregiver about your COPD.
- We can assist you in finding community programs and resources in your area.
- Tips to talk with your doctor and get the most out of your visit:
 1. Ask any questions you may have about your COPD. You can write them down and take them with you to your visit.
 2. Follow your doctor's advice — if you have questions or concerns, let your doctor know.
 3. Make sure your doctor knows what medicines you are taking.

Important screenings:

- Depression
- Other health conditions
- Preventive care screenings such as wellness checkups, mammograms and Pap tests

For more helpful information on managing your COPD



An Anthem Company

- [American Lung Association](#)
- [National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute \(NHLBI\)](#)

Sources:

*American Lung Association lungusa.org/

* National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI)

Explore COPD

nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/copd/, accessed November 8, 2013

*Healthfinder.gov

Use Medicines Safely

healthfinder.gov/HealthTopics/Category/everyday-healthy-living/safety/use-medicines-safely, accessed November 8, 2013.

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