

Information for patients and visitors

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# Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

**Respiratory Team**

**This leaflet has been designed to give you important information about your condition and to answer some common queries that you may have.**



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## What is COPD?

COPD means Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (Chronic means long term). It is a long term condition that includes chronic bronchitis and emphysema to varying degrees.

Chronic bronchitis is an inflammation of the airways, (the tubes that carry air to the lung tissue) leading to chronic cough and sputum, airway narrowing and breathlessness.

## How does COPD affect people?

You may notice that you are less active. You may experience shortness of breath, cough and sputum production. This may have happened gradually over a long period of time.

Living with a long term condition like COPD can lead to anxiety or feeling low in mood. This can be addressed with your GP.

This leaflet aims to explain your condition, how it affects you and helps you to manage your COPD.

## What causes COPD?

Smoking is the most common cause of COPD. Stopping smoking reduces the risk of developing COPD. Stopping smoking if you have COPD reduces the speed of COPD progression.

Some occupations and inherited enzyme deficiencies can cause COPD (especially in smokers).

## How is COPD Diagnosed?

You may have noticed that you have a cough, sputum, or breathlessness. This may be intermittent such as winter bronchitis or it may be continuous. The sooner you seek help the better the outcome.

Your GP will confirm the diagnosis of COPD with spirometry. Spirometry is a breathing test where you breathe out into a machine. This will indicate if your airways are narrowed.

You may have a chest x-ray or a complex test such as CT scan or breathing test if there is uncertainty about your diagnosis.

## Keeping Healthy

Unfortunately, once you have COPD it cannot be cured. Many people with severe COPD can manage to live full and active lives. There are many things you can do to keep yourself healthy:

- Stopping smoking is the most important thing you can do. There are many support services to help you, which will improve your chances of quitting
- Keep fit. Maintain regular activities. It's ok to get out of breath, know your limits
- Diet is important. Try to eat a healthy diet that includes your 5 a day. Aim to achieve your ideal weight. Being overweight puts even more strain on your lungs, being too thin weakens your muscles
- Medications. If your doctor has prescribed you any medications, it is important to take them. If you are on inhalers, it is recommended that your inhaler technique is checked regularly
- Rescue medication. Your doctor may provide you with antibiotics and steroid tablets to keep at home if your COPD gets worse
- Influenza and pneumonia vaccinations are recommended. These are available from your GP



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- Pulmonary Rehabilitation is available locally to people with COPD. This covers exercise, education and support. Pulmonary Rehabilitation is an excellent way to regain your fitness and can be accessed via your G.P. or Respiratory Team
- Oxygen therapy may be available to patients after assessment. **Oxygen is not a treatment for breathlessness**

### Reference Section

National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (2010) Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease.

### Concerns and Queries

If you have any concerns / queries about any of the services offered by the Trust, in the first instance, please speak to the person providing your care.

#### For Diana, Princess of Wales Hospital

Alternatively you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on (01472) 875403 or at the PALS office which is situated near the main entrance.

#### For Scunthorpe General Hospital

Alternatively you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on (01724) 290132 or at the PALS office which is situated on C Floor.

Alternatively you can email:  
[nlg-tr.PALS@nhs.net](mailto:nlg-tr.PALS@nhs.net)

### Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Foundation Trust

**Diana Princess of Wales Hospital**  
**Scarho Road**  
**Grimsby**  
**01472 874111**

**Scunthorpe General Hospital**  
**Cliff Gardens**  
**Scunthorpe**  
**01724 282282**

**Goole & District Hospital**  
**Woodland Avenue**  
**Goole**  
**01405 720720**

[www.nlg.nhs.uk](http://www.nlg.nhs.uk)

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# COPD SELF MANAGEMENT

Name:

GP / Surgery:



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### GREEN

When you feel well, you should take note of the following:

- How much sputum / phlegm
- What colour your sputum is
- What activities are normal for you each day
- How breathless normal activities make you

Try to keep well using the hints and advice in your COPD Information Leaflet.

### AMBER

If your symptoms are worsening beyond normal day to day variations:

Increase your reliever treatment:

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If your shortness of breath has not improved within 24 hours:

- Take your course of steroid tablets
- Check the thickness, colour and amount of sputum. If your sputum is:
  - Thicker
  - Changed in colour – Green / Brown / Yellow
  - Increased in amount

Begin taking a full course of antibiotics, if available.

If you do not have a supply of steroids and/or antibiotics, you will need to seek advice from your GP.

In addition:

- If you use home oxygen, you may need to use it for longer. Check with your doctor or nurse
- Rest
- Eat little and often
- Drink adequate amounts of fluid
- Remember to do your breathing exercises

### RED

If your symptoms are much worse than usual, seek urgent medical advice

Take your maximum reliever inhaler dose:

1. Start taking your steroid tablets immediately
2. Look for signs such as:
  - High fever
  - Chest pains
  - You are too breathless to speak
  - Confusion

**If you have any of the above please seek urgent help or dial 999.**

