

# **R→Imp** COPD Care Guide

This page provides a basic outline of some of the ways in which COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease) can be treated. It provides an explanation of the types of inhalers your GP may prescribe you, helpful breathing exercises, and what Pulmonary Rehabilitation entails.

Although COPD is a permanent condition, you can slow down its progression by treating it effectively. Treatment ranges from therapy techniques such as Pulmonary Rehabilitation to Breathing Exercises and Lifestyle Changes. Treating COPD is a process that requires commitment and perseverance and is only as effective as you make it.

## Treating COPD

### Inhalers

There are three types of inhalers your GP could prescribe you – short acting, long acting or steroid. Most people with COPD use short-acting bronchodilator inhalers that relax and widen your airways. Short acting inhalers can be used up to 4 times a day when you feel breathless.

Long acting inhalers should be used when you experience symptoms throughout the day, such as breathlessness, persistent coughing, chest infections, and wheezing. Steroid inhalers should only be used if flare-ups persist even while using long acting inhalers. The corticosteroid medication in steroid inhalers help reduce inflammation.

## Breathing Exercises

### 1. Pursed-lips Breathing

There are two breathing exercises that may help you when you feel breathless, pursed-lips breathing and diaphragmatic (abdominal) breathing. Pursed-lips breathing slows your breathing down and keeps your airways open for longer thus allowing you to improve the exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide (the removal of stale air). The [COPD Foundation](#) clearly outlines the steps for pursed lips breathing below:

1. Breathe in through your nose (as if you are smelling something) for about 2 seconds.
2. Pucker your lips like you are getting ready to blow out candles on a birthday cake.



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3. Breathe out very slowly through pursed-lips, two to three times as long as you breathed in.
4. Repeat.

## 2. Diaphragmatic Breathing

Diaphragmatic breathing is harder than pursed-lips breathing as you are essentially retraining your diaphragm to work properly. Try this technique when you are well rested and, ideally, laying down. Once again, the COPD foundation provides a step by step explanation of the technique:

1. Relax your shoulders.
2. Place one hand on your chest and the other on your belly.
3. Inhale through your nose for about two seconds.
4. As you breathe in, your belly should move outward. Your belly should move more than your chest.
5. As you breathe out slowly through pursed-lips, gently press on your belly. This will push up on your diaphragm to help get your air out.
6. Repeat.

Further, when you are feeling short of breath during exercise or regular activities, use these 3 steps:

1. Stop your activity.
2. Reset by sitting down, relaxing your shoulders, and doing pursed-lips breathing until you catch your breath.
3. Continue doing pursed-lips breathing as you restart your activity.

## COPD management plan

### Lifestyle Changes

There are three main lifestyle changes. First and most obvious, stop smoking and avoid second hand smoke. Try to avoid places with dust, fumes, and other toxic substances you might inhale. Second, ensure that you are consuming a healthy, nutritional diet. And third, stay active by exercising. According to the [COPD Foundation](#), “exercise, done correctly and safely, is one of the best things you can do to be less short of breath.” It is a vicious cycle, the less you do the less you are able to do. Ensure that you speak to your GP before engaging in different types of exercise.

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## Pulmonary Rehabilitation

Pulmonary rehabilitation aims to reduce your symptoms and help you manage your condition. Sessions are usually twice a week for at least six weeks. The process can consist of exercise, nutritional and psychological counselling, and training in the management of your disease.

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