

COVID-19 & COPD

As a COPD patient, you take daily steps to maintain your health and lung function. The COVID-19 pandemic can cause concern and stress about your ability to stay healthy because you are at a higher risk of contracting COVID-19. However, there are ways to help minimize your risk of contracting the virus and stay on top of your well-being as a COPD patient.

COPD vs. COVID-19

There are no definite symptoms that distinguish COVID-19 symptoms and the symptoms that accompany a COPD flare-up. You should contact your doctor for evaluation if you experience an increase in any of the following:

- shortness of breath
- amount of coughing or type of cough
- phlegm production and color
- wheezing
- resting oxygen saturation
- level of oxygen use
- frequency of use of your rescue inhaler
- fever



Minimize Your COVID-19 Risk

There are important guidelines to minimize the risk of contracting COVID-19 that should be followed whether you are a COPD patient or not.

- Frequently wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid people who are ill or think they may be ill.
- Practice social distancing – stay six feet or more away from others.
- Follow recommendations from your city and state for staying at home.
- Stay home if you are sick or think you may be sick.
- Disinfect surfaces around you frequently with disinfecting wipes or similar product.
- Voluntarily self-quarantine for 14 days if you are exposed to someone with COVID-19.
- Avoid any unnecessary travel, even short distances.

On top of these general guidelines, COPD patients should:

- Maintain your regular medications and treatment, as prescribed by your physician.
- Check that oxygen deliveries will continue as normal (if you are already on oxygen).
- Stock up on necessary medications and supplies such as food and prescriptions.
- Create or review your COPD Action Plan with your physician.
- Make a plan with your family member(s) and/or caregiver(s) for how to continue your care should you or

they get sick.

Family members and/or caregivers of COPD patients also should take extra precautions to minimize the risk of contracting COVID-19, like strictly following recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

When to Call Your Doctor

If you are a COPD patient and believe you have symptoms of COVID-19, call your physician. Your physician will help you determine if you should be tested or admitted for treatment and will help you navigate that process. You also should immediately stay away from others (self-isolate), especially if you have been to an area where infections have been high in the last month.

Questions you should ask your doctor if you believe you have COVID-19 or test positive for the virus include:

- Should I continue my regular treatment plan?
- Should I continue using my inhaled medications?
- Should I stop taking my inhaled or oral steroid?
- When should I go to the emergency room?
- Are there over-the-counter medications I can take to reduce symptoms?

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