

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)

Amerigroup Texas has a program for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). This program will help you better know and manage your COPD. We can assist you to set health goals and create a care plan that fits your way of life. You do not have to join the program. You are signed up as a member of Amerigroup.

Living with COPD

COPD is a long-term lung disease. The airways get narrowed and make it hard to breathe. But, it does not have to slow you down. Smoking is one cause of COPD.

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

Things to know

- Risk factors are things you may be around at home, work or school. These can cause a flare-up of symptoms. Some of these 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 issues can make it harder for you to control your COPD.
- We can give you more data to help you handle 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 handle your COPD, such as:
 1. Things for you to do every day to treat your COPD (or protect your lungs).
 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 signs 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. Medicines are not helping
7. You may have other signs

How to take your COPD medicines:

- 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 med usually does not last very long. It does not prevent you from having a COPD flare-up.
 2. Long-term medicines— this med does not work right away. It is used to help your daily 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 medicines the right way.
- We can help you to use inhalers, spacers, nebulizers and other devices.
- We can help you understand how your medicines work.

Ways you can improve or manage your COPD:

- Quit smoking. This can make the best progress to controlling your COPD. We have support programs. There are medicines that can help you stop 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 way of life. We can assist you to make healthy changes. These small steps, one at a time can help your COPD.
- Get a flu shot every year. Ask your doctor if you should get the pneumonia shot.

Support to help you manage your COPD:

- We can help you talk to your family or caregiver about your COPD.
- We can help you find group 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 have about COPD. Write them down and take them with you to your visit
 2. Follow your doctor's advice – if you have questions or worries, 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

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

Sources:

*American Lung Association www.lungusa.org/

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

Explore COPD

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/copd/>, accessed November 8, 2013

*Healthfinder.gov

Use Medicines Safely

<http://www.healthfinder.gov/HealthTopics/Category/everyday-healthy-living/safety/use-medicines-safely>, accessed November 8, 2013.