

Tameside & Glossop

Clinical Commissioning Group



**Rescue Medications
and
COPD**

Patient Information Leaflet

NHS

What is an exacerbation of COPD?

An exacerbation is the name given to the time when you feel more unwell from your chest, by increased breathlessness and either a change in colour of sputum to cloudy yellow or green, and possibly an increased amount, or chest tightness which is much worse than normal.

How do I take my Rescue Medication

You have been given a 5 day prescription for:

Prednisolone 5mg, 6 tablets a day for 5 days.

This should only be taken under the following circumstances

Chest feels tighter than normal and difficulty breathing more so than normal for you and you feel unwell.

If your sputum is clear, steroids should be first line.

If your sputum is cloudy and changes colour to yellow or green, then you may need to speak to your GP

Why have I not got antibiotics in this rescue pack

Clinical guidance now says a lot of COPD exacerbations are not bacterial and could be viral in nature so antibiotics would not work.

Lung function is improved by just steroids alone. **We need to safeguard antibiotics, so they work when we do need them.**

What should I do if it does not work?

You should seek medical advice at any time if your symptoms worsen or they do not improve within 48 hours of starting this medication.

What do I do after I have started my rescue pack?

Once you have started your pack, you need to contact your GP at the next opportunity and let them know what has happened. Then they can arrange a review and a replacement for the next time you need your medication.

How to look after yourself

- Have plenty of rest.
- Drink enough fluids to avoid feeling thirsty.
- Fever is a sign the body is fighting the infection and usually gets better by itself in most cases. You can use paracetamol if you feel uncomfortable because of a fever.
- Use a tissue (and dispose of appropriately) and wash your hands well to help prevent spread of your infection to your family, friends and others you meet.

The following are possible signs of serious illness and should be assessed urgently:

1. If your skin is very cold or has a strange colour, or you develop an unusual rash.
2. If you feel confused or have slurred speech or are very drowsy.
3. If you have difficulty breathing. Signs that suggest breathing problems can include:
 - breathing more quickly than what is normal for you
 - turning blue around the lips and the skin below the mouth
 - skin between or above the ribs getting sucked or pulled in with every breath.
4. If you develop a severe headache and are sick.
5. If you develop chest pain.
6. If you have difficulty swallowing or are drooling.
7. If you cough up blood.
8. If you are feeling a lot worse. If have any of these symptoms, are getting worse or are sicker than you would expect (even if your/their temperature falls), trust your instincts and seek medical advice urgently from NHS 111 or your GP.

Less serious signs that can usually wait until the next available appointment:

1. If you are not starting to improve a little after 48 hours of starting the rescue medication
2. Mild side effects such as diarrhoea, however seek medical attention if you're concerned.

**If you need any further information or have any questions
about the changes in your rescue medication, please contact
your practice**