

Your COPD Medications

Your doctor will prescribe medication to help keep your airways open, relieving your COPD symptoms.

In fact, most people take several medications to help them breathe better.

There are several types of medications you might be prescribed.

One type of medication is Bronchodilators.

As the medication starts working, the muscles around the bronchial tubes relax, and the airways open up.

Now, air can move more freely into and out of the lungs and you can breathe more easily.

Also, open airways make it easier to move mucus out of the lungs.

There are different types of bronchodilators. Some bronchodilators are used when you need relief from symptoms very quickly.

They start working within 15 to 20 minutes. That is why they are called fast-acting bronchodilators.

There are other types of bronchodilators that are used to prevent symptoms from occurring. They can provide relief from symptoms for up to twelve hours or longer.

That is why they are called long-acting bronchodilators.

Another type of COPD medication is corticosteroid anti-inflammatories.

As the medication starts working the inflammation and swelling in the bronchial tubes goes down widening the airways.

Now more air gets in and out of the lungs helping other medications penetrate deeper.

Corticosteroid anti-inflammatories can be very powerful. If they are prescribed for you, make sure you follow your instructions carefully.

Many people take a medication that combines a bronchodilator and an anti-inflammatory. This type of medication is called a combination medication.

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Another type of anti-inflammatory medication is a PDE₄ Inhibitor. PDE₄ Inhibitors are non-steroid anti-inflammatories. They help stop inflammation and swelling in your airways.

While it is not known exactly how PDE₄ inhibitors work, they do help prevent flare-ups in people with more severe COPD or those with more frequent flare-ups.

You and your healthcare provider will work together to determine which medications work best for you.

"And there were I'm going to say maybe four, possibly five, different meds that I had to try where I could really feel a difference." – Michael, Patient

And talk with your healthcare provider about possible side effects to your medications, and what to do if you experience any.

Whatever medications are prescribed, take them as directed even when you are feeling well.

Most COPD medications require a specific device to get the medicine into your lungs.

You could use a metered dose inhaler, a dry powder inhaler, or a nebulizer.

To make sure you are using whatever device you use correctly, have your healthcare provider evaluate your technique.

Other COPD meds maybe taken in pill or liquid form.

And discuss with your healthcare provider if cough medications are right for you to help clear mucus out of your lungs and help you cough less.

Here are some general tips when using COPD medications.

Make sure you follow all instructions, and take the proper dosage of your medications as directed.

Keep taking your medications even when you are feeling well.

Always swish, gargle and spit after using all your inhalers especially the corticosteroid inhalers.

And be aware if your medication should be taken after eating.

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Make a complete list of all your medications and keep it with you at all times, just in case of an emergency. Make sure you update this list after each doctor's visit.

Another good idea is to wear a Medic Alert bracelet, or necklace, that notes your lung disease.

And if you have any side effects or have difficulty administering your medication, call your doctor.

When you have COPD, it is common to take several medications. Work with your healthcare team to learn how to use them correctly.

Your COPD medications will help limit your COPD symptoms. They are a key part in helping you get the most out of every day.

"I've never stopped taking them. So without them I would not be able to sit here and talk to you."

– Marilyn, Patient

"I feel pretty good as long as I stay on the routine with the medicine." – Bill, Patient