

Talking with your doctor about COPD

Your doctor looks after your health together with a range of other healthcare providers, such as your practice nurse, pharmacist or physiotherapist. Good communication with all healthcare providers (including your doctor) will help you to look after your health. For the best management of your COPD it is important to arrange regular visits with the same doctor. Information provided in this fact sheet is useful for talking to any healthcare provider.

Make sure you understand what your doctor tells you

It is easy to get flustered or confused when talking to a doctor, especially if he or she uses words or terms that you are not familiar with. However, it is important that you understand exactly what they are saying. It is also important that your doctor understands what is important to you.

Making sure that you understand what your doctor is saying will help you to better manage your health.

It is helpful to **write down your questions and concerns before your visit** to make sure you remember to ask everything you want to. You may find it useful to have a 'special book' (for example a diary or calendar) to keep track of your COPD symptoms. An example of a COPD Symptom Diary is attached.

If you do not understand what your doctor tells you, do not be embarrassed to ask them to explain the information again. They know that you have a lot to take in. Ask your doctor to write down important information and the answers to your questions. This way you can read everything after the visit and it may help you discuss things with your family or friends.

Why regular visits to your doctor are important

Seeing your doctor and other healthcare providers regularly will help you meet your treatment goals. You should go to your appointments even if you are feeling well so they can keep track of your health and progress.

By seeing your healthcare providers regularly you are taking control of your COPD.

Tips when visiting your doctor

- ❖ Make appointments with the same doctor, except in an urgent situation and your normal doctor is not available.
- ❖ Make a list of questions and concerns before your visit. List these in order of priority.
- ❖ If you have many questions ask for a longer appointment or schedule a second visit.
- ❖ Show your list to your doctor and decide together what you will discuss during this visit.
- ❖ Do not avoid asking questions because you are embarrassed. Your doctor is there to help you.
- ❖ Bring a friend or family member for support.
- ❖ Do not end the visit if you feel you do not fully understand what your doctor is saying. If something is unclear to you, ask for further explanation.
- ❖ Ask your doctor to write answers down for you to refer to again.
- ❖ Find out the best way to contact your doctor in case you have additional questions or if you are concerned about symptoms or suspect a flare-up.
- ❖ Let your doctor know if you have concerns over the costs of your treatment. They can help you find the best solution.

List your questions and concerns before your visit

Use the space below to write a list of questions and concerns that you want to talk to your doctor about. Take these pages with you next time you visit them. Things you may want to ask about could include:

- More information about COPD or your medication
- Ways to help you stop smoking
- Things that seem to make your breathing worse and how to deal with them
- What you can do to exercise safely
- What you can do to look after your health
- Where you can get more support.

My questions

Discuss with your doctor the benefits of a COPD Action Plan. A COPD Action Plan can be accessed from the Lung Foundation Australia website.

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This brochure is one in a series produced by Lung Foundation Australia to provide information on lung disease, its treatment and related issues. The information published by Lung Foundation Australia is designed to be used as a guide only, is not intended or implied to be a substitute for professional medical treatment and is presented for the sole purpose of disseminating information to reduce lung disease.

Any information relating to medication brand names is correct at the time of printing. Lung Foundation Australia has no control or responsibility for the availability of medications, which may occasionally be discontinued or withdrawn.

Please consult your family doctor or specialist respiratory physician if you have further questions relating to the information contained in this leaflet. For details of patient support groups in Australia please call 1800 654 301.

