

# ALGORITHM

## MANAGING EXACERBATIONS

### PATIENT IS FEELING UNWELL

They are finding it harder to breathe than usual or experiencing any of the following:

- More coughing
- More phlegm
- Thicker phlegm than usual.

**Recommend** start using more short-acting bronchodilator (SABA) e.g. *salbutamol 4-8 puffs (400-800 mcg), via MDI and spacer every 3-4 hours, titrated to response.*



### PATIENT IS FEELING WORSE

If 3-4 hourly SABA not relieving symptoms adequately, **commence oral prednisolone 30-50mg daily (in addition to daily prescribed medicines) for 5 days, then stop.**

If clinical features of infection are present:

- Fever
- A change in colour and/or volume of phlegm

**Also commence** oral antibiotics (amoxicillin or doxycycline) for 5 days.

If patient has frequent exacerbations, consider whether further optimisation of daily prescribed medicine is required.



### SEND TO HOSPITAL

Send to hospital if any of the following:

- Marked increased intensity of symptoms
- New or worsening peripheral oedema
- Worsening of hypoxaemia from usual (*if known*)
- SpO<sub>2</sub> <92% if not on home oxygen
- Shortness of breath that is worsening and/or at rest
- High fever
- Altered mental state (*confusion, slurred speech, drowsiness*)
- Chest pain
- Worsening of co-morbidities (*e.g. heart failure, ischaemic heart disease, diabetes*)
- Inability to perform daily activities and/or manage safely at home
- Increased anxiety (*feeling scared/afraid*).

### PATIENT IS FEELING BETTER

#### Recommend:

- Step down short-acting bronchodilator use
- Return to usual daily prescribed medicines
- Check and correct inhaler device technique
- Review and reinforce use of the COPD Action Plan.



### PATIENT IS FEELING BETTER

5 days after treatment commenced:

- Step down short acting bronchodilator use
- Cease oral prednisolone and/or antibiotics after 5 days and continue usual daily prescribed medicines
- Check and correct inhaler device technique
- Review and reinforce use of the COPD Action Plan.



### PATIENT STILL UNWELL

5 days after treatment commenced:

- Review by GP or specialist
- Review and reinforce use of the COPD Action Plan
- Check and correct inhaler device technique.



Based on COPD-X Plan: Australian and New Zealand Guidelines for the Management of COPD; Australian Therapeutic Guidelines. Visit [www.copdx.org.au](http://www.copdx.org.au) for further details.



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