

Factsheet 5

Updated on 14 May 2020

Advice for people who have COPD and are not in high risk groups of COVID-19

In line with British Lung Foundation and the British Thoracic Society (BTS), if the person has COPD and is **NOT** listed in the high groups then provide them with the following advice:

- The best way to avoid being exposed to the virus and stop the spread of it is to stay at home and only go out for essential items.
- Ensure where people are going out for essential items, they are maintaining social distancing
 - keeping two meters apart from people.
- To plan support with daily routine. This may include asking family and friends in getting food, medication and other essential items should the spread of the virus cause significant disruption to their life or they get symptoms and need to self-isolate. If support is not available from family/friends or neighbours, then individuals can be signposted to their country council website. Most councils have added contact details for community hubs for self- isolating households who have no support available. Alternatively, healthcare professionals in your General Practice Surgery or their local Community Pharmacist may be able to refer them to NHS Volunteers for the period of self- isolation.

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People should be encouraged to:

- Maintain good personal hygiene by washing their hands regularly with soap and water at a duration of 20 seconds.
- Sneeze or cough into a tissue and dispose of it immediately. Where this is not possible sneeze or cough into their elbow/sleeve
- Clean regularly touched surfaces.
- Go out for a form of exercise at least once a day. Encourage people with COPD to commence home exercise programmes, and complete strength activities as they would normally do.
- Encourage people to maintain a healthy balanced diet and remind patients of ensuring good fluid intake to benefit sputum viscosity (be aware of any co-morbidities which may affect this).
- Signpost people to British Lung Foundation where there is a magnitude of resources on how to keep active.
- Ensure they have a sufficient supply of their medication at home and support their local pharmacy and GP practice by ensuring they re-order their repeat prescription in good time. **REMEMBER** to inform patients not to over order or stockpile their inhalers and **NOT** to share their inhalers or spacers with any family and friends.
- Encourage the use of face masks in enclosed spaces as outlined by the government as this may help to reduce the spread of the virus when they are coughing.
- Encourage people to use digital self - management tools as the patient can track their health as well as providing them with holistic management strategies.

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- If the person with COPD smokes encourage smoking cessation. As outlined by the British Lung Society people who smoke are five times more likely to get flu and twice as likely to get pneumonia.
- It is important to remind people with COPD who are on medication to inform their healthcare professional if smoking cessation commences.
- Remind patients (where appropriate) that there is no evidence that inhaled steroids increase the risk of getting COVID-19 so patients should continue to use their ALL their medications as prescribed.
- It is really important for patients to have their inhaler technique checked regularly to ensure full pharmacological effect as well as reduce side effects. Signpost patient to the following [video](#) to help them do this.

References:

COPD and COVID-19 for Healthcare Professionals. Available from: <https://brit-thoracic.org.uk/about-us/covid-19-information-for-the-respiratory-community/#copd-and-covid-19-for-healthcare-professionals>