

COPD

Information to help you improve your health with
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama

COPD is a chronic, progressive disease which can make it hard to breathe easily. Symptoms include coughing, increased mucus production, and shortness of breath.



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Managing COPD as the Weather Changes

As temperatures drop and the weather changes, it can be harder to manage your chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). In the colder fall and winter months, you could have greater difficulty breathing and experience heavy coughing. When you breathe in cold air, it can trigger a muscle spasm in your airway causing it to tighten. This can lead to increased mucus production, excessive coughing and shortness of breath.

Tips for dealing with COPD this season:

- Use techniques to manage stress
- Exercise and eat healthy foods
- Get enough sleep
- Practice good handwashing
- Avoid smoke, dust or going outside if allergen levels are high
- Use an air purifier to remove allergens and improve air quality
- Get the flu vaccine
- Change HVAC filters regularly

Following these recommendations will help you prepare for this season and prevent unnecessary emergency room visits.



Improving COPD Medication Adherence

Taking your COPD medication as prescribed is extremely important in managing symptoms. Following a treatment plan can slow the progression of COPD and improve your quality of life. Not taking your medicine—the right dose, the right way, at the right time and frequency as prescribed—can lead to worsening symptoms, hospitalization and possible life-threatening complications.

Ways to improve medication adherence:

- Develop a routine and take your medicine at the same time every day
- Use a pillbox to keep medications organized
- Set an alarm for when you should take your medicine
- Keep a calendar with your medications and note each time you take a dose
- When traveling, pack enough medication, plus a few extra doses in case you're delayed getting home

It can be challenging to adhere to your COPD medication regimen, so talk with your doctor if you have questions about devices, treatment options or lifestyle changes you should make. Before taking over-the-counter medications, talk to your doctor to see how they might impact your COPD medication.

5 Common COPD Myths

Understanding your condition can be challenging and there are many myths surrounding COPD. Get the facts on how COPD is impacting you.

MYTH	FACT
✘ Only smokers can get COPD	✔ COPD is often associated with smoking, but there are many people who get this condition and have never smoked.
✘ There's no treatment for COPD	✔ You can do many things to help manage your COPD and improve your quality of life. It's important to quit smoking, eat a healthy diet, get plenty of exercise and get your flu and pneumonia vaccines to prevent serious illness.
✘ If you have COPD, it's too late to quit smoking	✔ Active smokers with COPD who quit smoking can significantly slow their loss of lung function.
✘ You can't exercise if you have COPD	✔ Moderate exercise can lessen COPD, strengthen your heart and reduce stress.
✘ COPD only impacts your lungs	✔ COPD can affect your entire body. Because you may have lower oxygen levels, it can be more difficult for your heart to send blood to your lungs. It can also impact your mental health because you may feel isolated from the people in your life. Remaining active and staying socially engaged are important parts of managing your COPD.



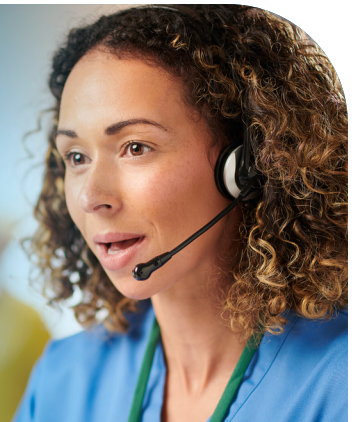
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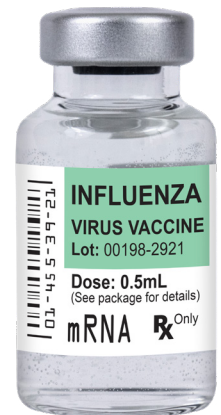


This year, get the flu shot. **Not the flu.**

Did you know you don't have to visit a doctor for your flu shot?

Flu shots may be available at:

- Your favorite pharmacy
- Grocery stores near you
- Warehouse club stores
- The county health department
- Your neighborhood library



Most places publicize this service with on-site banners or with posts on their social media accounts or website. Watch for a convenient location in your area!



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