

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease Rescue Pack Information

Background

COPD remains one of the most common causes of emergency admission and readmission to hospital nationally, although a decrease in the admission rate for this condition was seen during the first year of the COVID pandemic¹.

The NICE guideline for COPD in over 16's makes the following recommendations²:

- Develop an individualised exacerbation action plan in collaboration with each person with COPD who is at risk of exacerbations.
- Offer people a short course of oral corticosteroids and a short course of oral antibiotics to keep at home as part of their exacerbation action plan if:
 - they have had an exacerbation within the last year, and remain at risk of exacerbations
 - they understand and are confident about when and how to take these medicines, and the associated benefits and harms
 - they know to tell their healthcare professional when they have used the medicines, and to ask for replacements.
- At all review appointments, discuss corticosteroid and antibiotic use with people who keep these medicines at home, to check that they still understand how to use them. For people who have used 3 or more courses of oral corticosteroids and/or oral antibiotics in the last year, investigate the possible reasons for this.

In this document we refer to this stand-by supply of antibiotics and corticosteroids for an infective COPD exacerbation as a 'Rescue Pack'. See reference 4 for a sample individualised exacerbation action plan; 'Managing COPD flare-ups'.

COPD Patient Reviews

NICE advises that patients with COPD (stages 1-3) should be reviewed at least once per year and more frequently if indicated, and to cover the issues listed below²:

- Smoking status and motivation to quit
- Adequacy of symptom control:
 - Breathlessness
 - Exercise tolerance
 - Estimated exacerbation frequency
- Need for pulmonary rehabilitation
- Presence of complications
- Effects of each drug treatment
- Inhaler technique
- Need for referral to specialist and/or therapy services

- Measurement of:
 - FEV1 and FVC
 - calculate BMI
 - MRC dyspnoea score

Additional requirements are included for patients in the 'very severe' category (stage 4).

Please also ensure that patients have been offered a flu vaccine during the flu season, or a prompt to do so at other times of the year.

Prescribing Guidance

Please note that the recommended course length for prednisolone in rescue packs was reduced to five days in 2019². Some patients may still have the longer course lengths on their repeat templates and this should now be reviewed, with a view to reducing to five days.

The **first line** choice of antibiotic in a **COPD Rescue Pack** is amoxicillin³:

Amoxicillin 500mg Capsules; Take ONE capsule three times daily for 5 days. For COPD flare-up.

Prednisolone 5mg Tablets; Take SIX tablets immediately and then SIX tablets each morning for 4 more days. For COPD flare-up.

For patients intolerant to, or otherwise unable to have amoxicillin; the alternative is doxycycline:

Doxycycline 100mg Capsules; Take TWO capsules on the first day, then ONE capsule ONCE a day for 4 more days. For COPD flare-up.

Prednisolone 5mg Tablets; Take SIX tablets immediately and then SIX tablets each morning for 4 more days. For COPD flare-up.

References

1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/interactive-health-atlas-of-lung-conditions-in-england-inhale-2022-update/interactive-health-atlas-of-lung-conditions-in-england-inhale-february-2022-update#background-and-further-information>
2. NICE Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease in over 16s: diagnosis and management, NG115. Published: 05 December 2018, updated: 26 July 2019. <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng115>
3. NICE Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (acute exacerbation): antimicrobial prescribing, NG114. Published: 05 December 2018. <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng114>
4. British Lung Foundation Managing COPD flare-ups: <https://www.blf.org.uk/support-for-you/copd/your-copd-self-management-plan>

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