

# BE FLARE AWARE

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## PREPARING FOR YOUR NEXT APPOINTMENT

Living with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) can be overwhelming and can be made even more challenging when you experience a flare-up. This sudden worsening of the disease can last for days, or even weeks, and should not be dismissed.<sup>1, 2</sup> **It's never too early to discuss flare-ups with your healthcare team (which may include your general practitioner, specialist, nurse, or pharmacist).**

**It's important to play an active role in the management and treatment of your COPD** by having clear and honest conversations with your doctor to help identify and better manage flare-ups. If you're feeling nervous to do so, or are not quite sure what questions to ask, below are some tips that may help you prepare for your next appointment.

### Before your next appointment:

- If you haven't already, take the quiz on [BeFlareAware.com.au](https://BeFlareAware.com.au) and download your results for discussion with your doctor
- Write down a list of questions and concerns ahead of your meeting. You can also share these points with a partner, caregiver, or close friend to see if you've forgotten to mention anything important
- Bring a close friend or family member with you to the appointment if you're feeling nervous, anxious, or find it difficult to speak
- Take a pen and notebook to your appointment, so you can take notes and make sure you remember everything you discuss with your doctor
- Update your doctor on any changes to your health and/or medication use since your last conversation, for example:
  - Have you noticed any changes in your breathing? If so, what, where and when?
  - Have you missed out on any activities with your friends and family because of your COPD?
  - What is something you used to be able to do and/or would like to do but are unable to, today, due to your COPD?
  - How is living with COPD impacting your daily life?
  - Have you been hospitalised or made any visits to the emergency room?
  - Are you able to manage your COPD medication routine?
  - Do you have a written treatment action plan, and if so, does it need updating?
  - If you use a reliever inhaler, have you been doing so more than usual?
  - Have you had to use any additional medicines, for example, oral corticosteroids (prednisolone) or antibiotics in the last few months? If so, when did you last use them?

This content is intended for informational purposes for people who have been diagnosed with COPD, and should not take the place of talking with your doctor. It's not medical advice. Do not stop or change your COPD medication without consulting your doctor.

To access further information and support on how to live well with your lung condition, contact Lung Foundation Australia via free call 1800 654 301 or visit [lungfoundation.com.au](https://lungfoundation.com.au)

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**BeFlareAware.com.au**

#### References:

1. Lung Foundation Australia. Patients & Carers. Overview. Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease. <https://lungfoundation.com.au/patients-carers/living-with-a-lung-disease/copd/overview/>. Last date of access: April 2022.
2. GOLD Pocket Guide to COPD Diagnosis, Management, and Prevention: 2022 Report. Available at: [https://goldcopd.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/GOLD-POCKET-GUIDE-2022-v1.1-22Nov2021\\_WMV.pdf](https://goldcopd.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/GOLD-POCKET-GUIDE-2022-v1.1-22Nov2021_WMV.pdf). Last date of access April 2022.

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## TALK OPENLY WITH YOUR DOCTOR

**IT'S IMPORTANT TO BE COMPLETELY HONEST AND ASK YOUR DOCTOR ANY QUESTIONS YOU HAVE SO THEY CAN PROVIDE YOU WITH THE BEST SUPPORT TO HELP YOU BETTER MANAGE YOUR COPD, AND HELP TO REDUCE THE RISK OF FUTURE FLARE-UPS.**

**During your next appointment, consider asking some of the following questions if they apply to you, and any others you may have:**

- What can I expect of my COPD over time?
- What are the symptoms or indicators of a flare-up?
- What should I do when I have a flare-up or feel my COPD worsening?
- Why do flare-ups happen and how long do they usually last?
- Why are flare-ups important to report?
- What treatment options do I have, including medications and other treatments?
- Will my treatment change if I have a flare-up?
- Am I using my medication and/or inhaler(s) correctly?
- Where can I obtain additional support (e.g., information, emotional, social)?
- What else can I do to better manage my symptoms and improve my lung health and quality of life?

### Notes

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2. GOLD Pocket Guide to COPD Diagnosis, Management, and Prevention: 2022 Report. Available at: [https://goldcopd.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/GOLD-POCKET-GUIDE-2022-v1.1-22Nov2021\\_WMV.pdf](https://goldcopd.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/GOLD-POCKET-GUIDE-2022-v1.1-22Nov2021_WMV.pdf). Last date of access April 2022.

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