



# How do I prepare for a visit to the doctor?

## THE **COPD** CAREGIVER'S TOOLKIT



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# How do I prepare for a visit to the doctor?

## IN THIS MODULE

- What questions should I ask the doctor?
- How and why should I track medications and vaccinations?
- How and why should I track COPD symptoms?

# WHAT QUESTIONS SHOULD I ASK THE DOCTOR?

Preparing questions ahead of time will help you make the most of your next appointment. Bring your list of questions to your next appointment.

## General care questions

- Discuss with your doctor when to call in a non-emergency. For example, some doctors want to be called at the first sign of a cold or respiratory problem.
- Ask for help or for local resources to quit smoking (for example, [Respiratory Health Association's webpage](#)).
- If the person you care for has other medical conditions—such as diabetes, obesity, osteoporosis, heart disease, or others not listed here—ask how those conditions should be included in the care you give.
- Talk about flu, pneumonia, and COVID-19 vaccines for the person you care for, as well as for family members in touch with the person you care for.
- Talk to the doctor about how to set up a nutrition plan for the person you care for.
- Ask if pulmonary rehabilitation is a good fit for the person you care for, and what options are available.
- Ask if oxygen therapy will help.
- Ask your doctor about indoor and outdoor triggers and any avoidance tips.

## Urgent care questions

- Discuss with the doctor the signs and symptoms of a COPD flare-up. Ask the doctor when you should call if you see changes in symptoms in the person you care for.
- Discuss when to call 911. Ask about how to spot the signs and symptoms of a COPD emergency.
- Talk to your doctor as soon as you think the person you care for may have an infection so your medical team can determine if he or she needs an antibiotic or other treatment.

## When you are ready to travel

- Ask the doctor about flight simulation testing.
- Ask the doctor which oxygen delivery device is safe for airline travel.



**Visit the Checklists and Forms section of *The COPD Caregiver's Toolkit* webpage** for a form to download, fill out, and print:

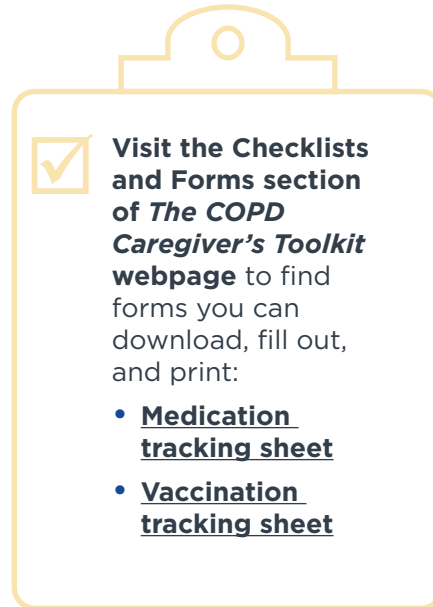
- **Questions to ask the doctor**

# HOW AND WHY SHOULD I TRACK MEDICATIONS AND VACCINATIONS?

It's important to keep a list of all medications taken by the person you care for. Bring the list to **every** appointment. Your doctor might have this information, but only you and the person you care for know what he or she is taking every day.

In terms of vaccinations, people with COPD should get a flu shot every year. People with COPD should also get a pneumonia vaccine. Talk to your healthcare provider about these vaccines, as well as the COVID-19 vaccine.

Keep track of vaccination dates so that doctors, specialists, and hospitals can stay coordinated in making sure the person you care for is covered. Bring the list to your visits with healthcare providers.



# HOW AND WHY SHOULD I TRACK COPD SYMPTOMS?

Properly tracked symptoms help doctors to create better treatment plans. This can also lead to better quality of life for both you and the person you're caring for.

Track COPD symptoms each day, and bring them to every appointment to give your doctor insight into how the person you care for is doing. This will also show you and your doctor if there has been a change in the health of the person you care for.

## Track daily symptoms

Keep track of:

- ease or difficulty breathing;
- amount of coughing;
- activity level;
- appetite/eating habits;
- sleeping habits.



To learn more tips for making the most of your doctor's appointment, please visit [RHA's COPD section of the Lung Health Library](#).

## Other suggestions for tracking

- Develop a symptom diary.
- Create a symptom calendar.
- Journals may be useful to help recall symptoms for doctor appointments.
- Monitor COPD flare-ups: It is important to track any increase in symptoms outside of what is normal for the person you care for. Increased symptoms can indicate a COPD flare-up. By tracking symptoms, you may be able to provide the doctor with information that could lead to changes in treatment or medications.