

# Fresh Air News

A Special Newsletter for MVP Members



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# Learning to Breathe Easier

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or COPD, is a lung disease that makes it hard to breathe. COPD gets worse over time. You can't undo the damage to your lungs. But you can take steps to breathe easier and feel better.

- If you have severe COPD, you may find that you take quick, small, shallow breaths.
- It's important to avoid shortness of breath. Do all you can to make breathing easier. This includes learning ways of breathing that can help the air flow in and out of your lungs.
- Breath training can help you take deeper breaths and reduce shortness of breath.
- You must practice breath training regularly to do it well.

## How do you use these breathing methods?

Use these methods when you are more short of breath than normal. Practice them often so you can do them well.

### Pursed-lip breathing.

Pursed-lip breathing helps you breathe more air out so that your next breath can be deeper. It makes you less short of breath and lets you exercise more.

- Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth while almost closing your lips.
- Breathe in for about two seconds, and breathe out for four to six seconds.

### Breathing with your diaphragm.

Breathing with your diaphragm helps your lungs expand so that they take in more air. Your diaphragm is the large muscle that separates your lungs from your belly.

- Lie on your back, or prop yourself up on several pillows.
- Put one hand on your belly and the other on your chest. When you breathe in, push your belly out as far as possible. You should feel the hand on your belly move out, while the hand on your chest does not move.
- When you breathe out, you should feel the hand on your belly move in. When you can do this type of breathing well while lying down, learn to do it while sitting or standing. Many people with COPD find this breathing method helpful.
- Practice this breathing method for 20 minutes at a time, two or three times a day.

### Breathing while bending forward at the waist.

Breathing while bending forward can reduce shortness of breath while you are exercising or resting. You can sit or stand to use this breathing method.

To use this breathing method, bend forward slightly at the waist. Keep your back straight. If you are standing, you may want to rest your hands on the edge of a table or the back of a chair.

Bending forward like this may make it easier for you to breathe. It helps your diaphragm move more easily.





# Handling a Flare-Up

If you have COPD, your usual shortness of breath could suddenly get worse. You may start coughing more and have more mucus. This flare-up is called a COPD exacerbation or a COPD attack.

A respiratory tract infection or air pollution could set off an attack. Or it may happen after a quick change in temperature or being around chemicals. You may not always know the cause.

## What are the warning signs?

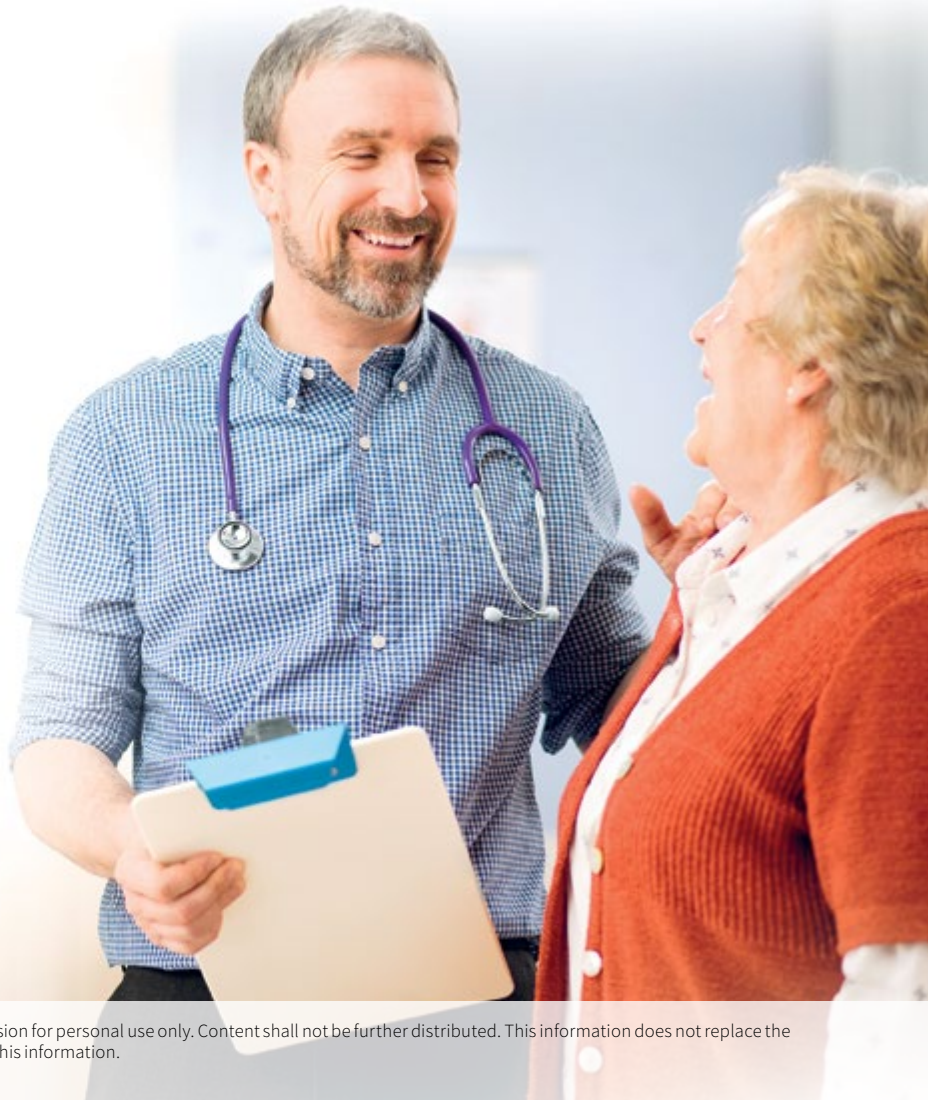
When you have a COPD flare-up, your normal symptoms suddenly get worse:

- You may have more shortness of breath and wheezing.
- You may have more coughing with or without mucus.
- You may have a change in the color or amount of the mucus.
- You may have a fever.
- You may feel very tired.
- You may be depressed or confused.

## Don't panic.

Don't panic if you start to have a flare-up. If you are prepared, you may be able to get it under control. Work with your doctor to make a plan for dealing with a COPD attack.

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MVP Health Care offers a condition health management program for members living with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). For more information or to see if you qualify, call 1-866-942-7966. MVP's program is based on the Global Strategy for the Diagnosis, Management, and Prevention of COPD, Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease (GOLD).

Information in this newsletter does not constitute medical advice. If you have questions about your health, talk to your doctor.

Health benefit plans are issued or administered by MVP Health Plan, Inc.; MVP Health Insurance Company; MVP Select Care, Inc.; and MVP Health Services Corp., operating subsidiaries of MVP Health Care, Inc. Not all plans available in all states and counties.

## Contact Us

For more information, call **1-866-942-7966**  
Monday–Friday, 8:30 am–5:00 pm.  
TTY: **1-800-662-1220**

### We value your opinion.

Please fill out a brief, anonymous survey at [mvplistsens.com](http://mvplistsens.com). We will use this information to create a better experience for all of our members. All responses are 100 percent confidential. The survey only takes a few minutes to complete.

## Handling a Flare-Up (continued)

### Take your medicines as your doctor says:

- First, use your quick-relief inhaler. If your symptoms don't get better after you use your medicine, have someone take you to the emergency room. Call an ambulance if needed.
- With inhaled medicines, a spacer or a nebulizer may help you get more medicine to your lungs. Ask your doctor or pharmacist how to use them properly. Practice using the spacer in front of a mirror before you have a flare-up. This may help you get the medicine into your lungs quickly.
- If your doctor has given you steroid pills, take them as directed.
- If your doctor prescribed antibiotics, take them as directed. Do not stop taking them just because you feel better. You need to take the full course of antibiotics.
- Call your doctor if you have to use your antibiotic or steroid pills.

### Call 911 if:

- You also are having chest pain.
- You feel like you are suffocating.



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