Protect your lungs

Reducing COPD flare-ups and hospital admissions

Respiratory infections are a common cause of COPD flare-ups. Simple precautions can reduce the spread of viruses and bacteria, while helping you stay active and connected.

Actions you can take

- Avoid close contact with people who have an active respiratory infection, including coughs and colds.
- If someone you live with is unwell, consider using separate rooms where practical. Wash your hands often and clean frequently touched surfaces.
- Wash your hands regularly, especially after contact with young children or someone who is unwell.
- Consider wearing a well-fitting face covering on public transport and in crowded or poorly ventilated indoor spaces.
- Choose well-ventilated, uncrowded places to meet others. Outdoor spaces are a good option when suitable.
- Give yourself extra space from people who are coughing or unwell.
- Accept the vaccinations offered to you. Ask your GP practice or community pharmacy which vaccinations you are eligible for.

Keep moving	Keep connected
Be physically active every day in a way that is right for you. Even gentle movement while sitting can help.	Continue social contact while choosing sensible precautions when respiratory infections are circulating.

“Make sure you exercise each day, even when sitting. It’s so important.”

Person living with COPD

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Why these precautions matter

Local hospital data showed 43% fewer admissions for COPD flare-ups in 2020 than in the previous year, during a period when simple respiratory infection precautions were widely used.

What the local review found

- The reduction represented a real fall in COPD flare-ups and admissions.
- People admitted with a flare-up were not more unwell on arrival.
- There was no increase in the need for ventilation or in deaths in hospital or within 30 days of going home.
- Similar reductions in COPD admissions were reported in other countries.

Your everyday COPD care still matters

- Take your regular medicines as prescribed.
- Use your inhalers correctly. Ask a nurse, pharmacist or doctor to check your technique if you are unsure.
- Follow your COPD action plan if you have one.
- Seek advice from your healthcare team if your breathing, cough or sputum changes, or if you are worried about your symptoms.

Useful information

NHS information about COPD
RightBreathe inhaler information
NICE guidance and information
NHS 111 online

Adapted from the patient leaflet developed by Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust with patient and public involvement partners. The core prevention messages and local findings have been retained and the wording refreshed.

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