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PULMONARY PATIENT & CHRONIC CARE GUIDE

Living & Coping with COPD

Pulmonary Rehabilitation, Pursed-Lip Breathing, Inhaler Adherence, Energy Conservation, and Exacerbation Action Plans

Living with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)—which encompasses chronic bronchitis and emphysema—involves adapting daily routines to manage progressive airflow limitation and shortness of breath. Successfully coping with COPD focuses on proactive self-care, mastering breathing techniques, maintaining prescribed inhaler regimens, conserving energy during daily activities, and participating in pulmonary rehabilitation.

> **Core Management Principle:** Managing COPD successfully relies on daily respiratory consistency. Using long-term controller inhalers, practicing pursed-lip breathing, and pacing physical activity preserves functional independence and quality of life.

1. Daily Self-Care: Inhaler Technique & Medication Adherence

Proper use and consistent adherence to prescribed pulmonary medications keep airways open, reduce inflammation, and prevent flare-ups.

Management Domain	Clinical Objective & Rationale	Practical Implementation
Bronchodilators & Controllers	Relax tightened airway muscles and reduce chronic bronchial inflammation over time.	Take daily long-acting bronchodilators and inhaled corticosteroids exactly as prescribed; keep rescue inhalers accessible for acute shortness of breath.
Mastering Inhaler Technique	Ensures aerosolized medication reaches deep into the lower airways rather than catching in the throat.	Use a spacer device with metered-dose inhalers when recommended, exhale completely before inhaling, and rinse your mouth after steroid use.
Infection Prevention	Protect compromised lung tissue from acute viral and bacterial infections that trigger severe exacerbations.	Receive annual influenza and COVID-19 vaccines, stay up to date on pneumococcal immunizations, and practice diligent hand hygiene.

2. Breathing Techniques & Energy Conservation

Mastering specialized breathing patterns and pacing daily tasks helps manage breathlessness effectively.

- **Pursed-Lip Breathing:** Inhale slowly through your nose for two counts with your mouth closed, then exhale slowly and gently through pursed lips (as if blowing out a candle) for four counts. This keeps airways open longer and eases breathing.
- **Diaphragmatic Breathing:** Practice breathing using your diaphragm and abdominal muscles rather than your upper chest accessory muscles to improve ventilatory efficiency.
- **Energy Conservation & Pacing:** Break daily routines (such as showering, dressing, and cooking) into smaller steps with planned rests. Exhale during exertion (e.g., when lifting or standing) rather than holding your breath.

3. Pulmonary Rehabilitation & Action Plan Preparedness

Structured physical conditioning and clear emergency instructions ensure long-term confidence and safety.

- **Pulmonary Rehabilitation Programs:** Participate in supervised outpatient pulmonary rehab programs combining monitored exercise training, breathing education, and nutritional counseling to improve stamina.
- **COPD Action Plan:** Keep a written, clinician-approved action plan detailing your daily baseline, early signs of an impending flare-up (increased coughing, color change in phlegm), and instructions on when to contact your doctor or use emergency rescue medications.