Chronic lung diseases, such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) (including emphysema and chronic bronchitis), idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, and cystic fibrosis may put people at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Based on data from other viral respiratory infections, COVID-19 might cause flare-ups of chronic lung diseases, making the risk for severe illness higher.

**Reduce your risk of getting sick with COVID-19**

> Continue your medications, including those with steroids (corticosteroids), and do not change your treatment plan without talking to your doctor.

> Avoid triggers that make your symptoms worse.

> Talk to your healthcare provider, insurance company, and pharmacist about maintaining a two-week supply for prescription and non-prescription medications to reduce trips to the pharmacy.

> Check that your vaccinations are up-to-date. Individuals over the age of 65 and those with underlying conditions are encouraged to be vaccinated against influenza and pneumococcal disease.

> Do not delay getting emergency care for your underlying condition. Emergency departments have contingency infection prevention plans to help protect you from getting COVID-19.

> Call your healthcare provider if you have any concerns about your underlying medical conditions or if you get sick and think that you may have COVID-19. If you need emergency help, call 911.
How to Use a Face Mask

Always wear a mask when around others, but especially when you are near or caring for a person with flu-like symptoms. Make sure you use a new or properly sterilized mask and use proper handwashing and social distancing hygiene practices.

Putting on a mask

> Ensure you are using a clean mask
> Wash your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer before use
> Pick up the mask by touching ear loops (or ties) only
> Avoid touching the mask itself
> Hold both ear loops and place a loop around each ear, or if using ties, secure them tightly around the head, leaving no gaps
> Fit the mask around your mouth, nose, and chin

While wearing a mask

> Your mask should be either completely on or off; do not wear it on or rest it under your chin
> Never wear a mask inside-out
> Remove your mask if soiled or damp; do not reuse a single-use mask
> Do not touch your mask, face, or adjust the mask while it is on
> If you touch your mask, wash your hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer right away
> Always follow social distancing and good hygiene practices

Removing a mask

> Grab ear loops only and lift the mask off ears, or untie the strings, touching only the ties
> Pull the bottom of the mask off and away from your mouth and chin
> Discard the mask in an appropriate receptacle (can be closed or sealed shut)
> Clean your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer

HOW TO CLEAN REUSABLE CLOTH MASKS

Washing machine

> To wash, launder the mask often in your washing machine in HOT water (160°F) using soap or detergent that leaves no residue
> Rinse well with fresh water and hang to air-dry

Hand washing

> You may choose to disinfect masks by soaking for five minutes in a solution of two tablespoons of bleach per quart (liter) of water or 1/3 cup (80ml) of bleach per gallon (3.84 liter) of water
> Rinse well with fresh water and hang to air-dry

About pulmonary rehabilitation (pulmonary rehab)

If your doctor recommends a pulmonary rehab program, you owe it to yourself to go. Pulmonary rehab is an exercise and education program for people with COPD and other breathing problems. Studies have shown the pulmonary rehab programs make a big difference for people at all stages of lung disease. Specifically, the program can:

> Ease your shortness of breath
> Build your capacity for exercise and activity
> Reduce anxiety and depression caused by lung disease
> Help you stay out of the hospital
> Improve your quality of life

Some plans may not cover these services. To verify coverage and benefits, please call Member Services at 800-538-5038 weekdays, 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Saturday 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., closed Sunday.

What are the stages of COPD?

At the time of your diagnosis, your doctor will determine the severity of your Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). COPD is a progressive illness, and your treatment may change as your symptoms change. COPD severity is classified in stages based on your breathing test results:

> **Stage I:** Mild COPD. You may not notice any symptoms, but breathing tests reveal lung damage.
> **Stage II:** Moderate COPD. At this stage of severity, you have shortness of breath when you’re active. You may notice persistent coughing or mucus.
> **Stage III:** Severe COPD. At this stage, shortness of breath begins to limit your daily activity. You feel tired and may have flare-ups (exacerbations) during which your symptoms are worse than usual.
> **Stage IV:** Very Severe COPD. Shortness of breath limits your activities. An exacerbation or lung infection may be life-threatening.

While it can seem discouraging to consider these stages, realize that they only tell part of the story. The rest of the story is yours to create. You have a lot of power to manage your symptoms and learn to breathe better, do more, and live well with COPD.

HOW IS COPD TREATED?

Treatment for COPD depends on the severity of your disease, your daily habits, and your overall health. Generally, treatment includes:

> Quitting smoking. This is the most powerful step you can take toward better health.
> Other daily lifestyle changes, such as exercising, practicing breathing techniques, lowering stress, and eating well. Your healthcare team can give you information and plans to help you care for yourself at home.
> Medication. Nearly everyone with COPD can be helped by medication. COPD medications include:

  * Quick-relief, or “rescue,” medications that you inhale to help you breathe better right away
  * Maintenance medications that help control symptoms and prevent exacerbations

> Oxygen therapy. If your COPD is mild, you may not need oxygen. Yet as COPD progresses, oxygen can be vital for helping you feel better and stay active. Studies have shown that oxygen therapy can extend your life as well.
> Surgery. A small number of people with COPD may be helped by lung volume reduction surgery. This surgery removes damaged lung tissue and creates more space for the diaphragm to move and help pull air into the lungs. Lung transplant may also be an option for treatment of severe COPD.

Your doctor can explain the plan for your treatment. Be sure to ask questions, and consider attending pulmonary rehabilitation (see left) for support. Also, for more information on managing your COPD, look to Intermountain’s Breathing Better: A handbook for people with COPD and other chronic lung conditions. The Breathing Better booklet is available from your providers or at intermountainhealthcare.org.
The content presented here is for your information only. It is not a substitute for professional medical advice, and it should not be used to diagnose or treat a health problem or disease. Please consult your doctor if you have any questions or concerns. The information that is contained in this newsletter does not guarantee benefits. Member discounts are not considered a plan benefit. If you have questions or want to confirm your benefits, call Member Services at 800-538-5038.

If you have a Medicare Advantage® plan, call us toll-free at 855-442-9900, weekdays 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Saturday 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., closed Sunday. Outside of these hours of operation, please leave a message and your call will be returned within one business day. TTY users, please call 711. SelectHealth is an HMO plan sponsor with a Medicare contract. Enrollment in SelectHealth Advantage depends on contract renewal.

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