

Living with Chronic Lung Disease

*This guide contains important information about Chronic Lung Disease. It contains key facts and instructions. Please keep this document, your "**Chronic Lung Disease Daily Management Plan**" and your medication list someplace where you and your family can easily get to it.*

What is Chronic Lung Disease?

- Chronic lung disease (or chronic respiratory disease) is a group of conditions that have similar characteristics. They often present with similar symptoms, are treated in similar ways, and can lead to the same problems if left untreated. Some of these conditions include:
 - Chronic bronchitis
 - Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
 - Chronic asthma
 - Emphysema
 - Bronchiectasis
- All these conditions are life-long (chronic) problems that need daily management.

What are the symptoms of Chronic Lung Disease (CLD)?

- Shortness of breath is the most common symptom for all
- Chronic cough
- Chronic sputum production
- Sometimes wheezing
- General symptoms
 - Fatigue
 - Lack of appetite

Things you need to do stay healthy

- **Don't smoke or hang around with smokers!** Smoking even a few cigarettes a day puts a lot of stress on your lungs (and your heart) and causes changes that may damage your lungs further and make it more difficult to treat you. If you need help with quitting, ask your care team.
- Know your medicines and take them exactly as they are prescribed.
- Don't skip dosages.
- Report problems with your medicines promptly.
- Your care team will give you a card to list all your medicines. Please keep it current! If any doctor changes your medicines or dosages, please ask them to write the changes in your list (including medicines that are stopped).
- Exercise according to your care team's instructions (see **high pollution days** below).
- Sometimes planned rest is prescribed by your care team.

- **Get your flu shot and pneumonia vaccines according to the recommended schedules.** Ask your team about this at your next visit if you have questions.
- Keep track of your symptoms. We have included more information on symptoms and a quick guide that tells you what to do if you don't feel well in your **Chronic Lung Disease Daily Management plan.**
- Learn about your disease. The more you know, the better you will do. CIGNA Medical group (along with your care team) offers a variety of written information, classes, and online resources to help you learn about the causes, symptoms, and treatment of lung disease.
- Some classes may deal with how to use oxygen, how to monitor your condition, and special breathing techniques.
- Help your team and yourself by taking an active role in your disease.

Problem days and seasons

- There are times when your condition requires special attention:
 - **High pollution days.** Pollution includes smoke, dust, or smog. On high pollution days you should stay indoors with windows and doors closed as much as possible. If you have to drive, avoid high pollution routes, such as freeways and keep your windows up. A lot of high pollution days in Phoenix occur in the winter months and cover the whole valley. Dust can occur at any time of the year and may be only in your area. Follow the same precautions as for high pollution days. Exercise during high pollution or high dust days should be done indoors.
 - **Cold and flu season.** Respiratory infections can be very difficult to manage if you have lung disease. Follow these precautions:
 - Stay away from people who are sick with colds or flu
 - If you must be out, a mask may protect you to some extent
 - **Get your flu shot every year, and make sure everyone in your household gets one too!** This protects you and them.
 - Ask your care team about the **pneumonia vaccine.** It is currently recommended twice in a lifetime and can be given at any time of the year. Your care team can tell you if you need one.
 - Wash your hands frequently and avoid hand shaking with anyone who is sick.

What is my Care Team?

Your care team is made up of your doctor and others he/she feels are important to your care. Other members of the team might include:

- Your doctor's back office nurse or front office help
- A Case Manager or Care Coordinator—an RN who specializes in disease management and community resources
- An educator and/or dietician who teaches disease management
- A specialist in lung disease (pulmonologist). In some cases, your primary doctor for your condition may be a pulmonologist instead of your PCP.

- A pharmacist who can help you manage your medicines

Your team will give you a list of names of your team members and their phone numbers.

What does my Care Team do?

You should expect your care team to respond to your needs. They should:

- Give you information to keep you healthier.
- Tell you what to do if you are sick.
- Be available quickly, by phone or in person.
- In some circumstances, they will decide if you need a specialist or special education.

What if I run out of medicines?

Medicines are very important in your treatment, and missing even a few doses of some medicines may make a big difference in your condition.

- It is always better to ask for refills on your prescriptions ahead of time so you don't run out—usually a week before you take your last pill.
- If you do run out, call your pharmacy as soon as possible. If you run out of a medicine you are supposed to take after the office is closed, it is best to contact the doctor or nurse on call. They can help you decide how important the medicine is at that moment.
- If you can't afford to buy your medicine, please let your pharmacist or doctor know. Sometimes we can identify less expensive alternatives or suggest special programs that will help you acquire your medicines.

How do I keep track of my medicines?

- Keeping track of your medicines may be a challenge. Please ask us about pill organizers and other tips for keeping track of medications.
- Take your medicines on a regular schedule—it helps you to remember to take them.
- Remember to keep an up to date list of your medicines.
- If you are easily confused by your medicines, get someone in your family to help you manage them.

What if I don't remember what I took?

Call your pharmacist. If the pharmacy is closed, call the doctor on call. Some medicines are not as critical as others. Other medicines are more dangerous if taken in excess than not taken at all. Your team can tell you what to do.

What is a “Chronic Lung Disease Daily Management Plan?”

Your management plan is a set of instructions that tells you what to do daily, especially if you are not feeling well, regardless of the cause. Your daily management plan has the name of the person to call, what information you should have available, and how soon you need to call.

What color is my day?

We sometimes use simple tools to help us communicate more easily. One scheme is to use colors to describe the kind of day you are having. This allows you to decide whether to call or not, and allows us to determine what we have to do to make you better. The color of your day can be categorized using green, yellow and red. Your **Chronic Lung Disease Daily Management Plan** will tell you exactly what the colors mean.

Can I be cured?

The conditions associated with chronic lung disease cannot be cured. With proper treatment you should be able to lead a full and active life.

What else should I plan for?

Sometimes the best way to deal with a progressive disease is to deal with the difficult decisions before they become a crisis. Although unpleasant, decisions about end of life—living wills, life-prolonging wishes, medical powers of attorney, hospice and palliative care—are best made when you are capable of making good decisions for yourself and your family. Feel free to discuss those issues with your physician and your care team.

Go over this plan with your care team. Make sure your family and/or caregiver knows where these documents are and please bring your Daily Management Plan and list of medications to your appointments or other unplanned visits, such as the emergency room or Urgent Care. The Daily Management Plan and medication list may be available on line—please ask your care team about this option.

Use this page to make notes:
