



## **Things to do to avoid an exacerbation**

**Ensure you have a flu vaccination every year**

**Do not under-estimate a worsening in breathing or coughing. If your symptoms get suddenly worse, it is time to see the doctor**

### **Remember to take your medicines**

- Take your medicines as prescribed by your doctor
- If using an inhaler, make sure you are using your inhaler correctly. You can check with the doctor or practice nurse if you do not think you are getting the correct dose of the drug
- Some inhaled medicines have been proven to reduce the likelihood of exacerbations

### **Avoid respiratory infections**

Respiratory infections affect the respiratory system and include colds, throat infections, chest infections, sinusitis and flu.

Respiratory infection is one of the commonest causes of exacerbations, and people with COPD should do everything they can to avoid getting colds or flu:

- Make sure you have a flu vaccination every year
- Avoid contact with people who have any type of respiratory infection
- Most colds are spread by droplet infection – viruses binding to tiny droplets of moisture in the air. These are either breathed in or picked up by hand-to-hand contact, then transmitted to you by touching your eyes, nose or mouth

### **Avoid outdoor pollution**

Because your lungs will not be able to clean themselves as effectively as those of a person without COPD, you will have to avoid anything that might irritate your lungs:

- Avoid going outside when there is a lot of pollution in the atmosphere. You may find out the pollution levels from weather reports
- Avoid places where there are a lot of exhaust fumes – busy roads and underground car parks are particularly high in exhaust fumes
- Try not to travel through areas where there is a lot of pollution
- Avoid situations where you will be exposed to cigarette smoke. Sit in the non-smoking sections of restaurants and bars

### **Reduce indoor pollution**

Many homes have things in them that can irritate the lungs. You can do a lot to purify the air in your own home, and make it a safer place to be:

- Make sure people don't smoke in your home
- Animal hair can be extremely irritating the lungs. If you have a pet, make sure you vacuum the house regularly to remove the build up of hair or dander. Never allow animals in bedrooms
- Make sure that bathrooms and kitchens are properly ventilated to prevent condensation causing mildew or mould. The spores that are released by mildew or mould are often extremely irritating to people with COPD
- Cleaning materials, glues and solvents often include chemicals that irritate the lungs. Try to avoid using products that contain these products in non-ventilated areas. It is best to avoid using aerosols altogether