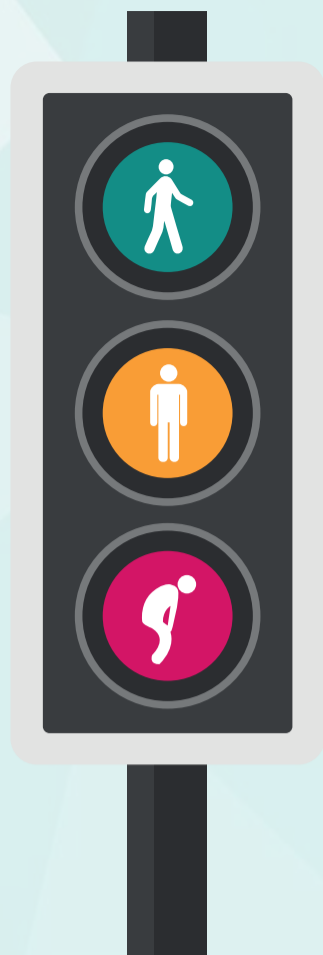


Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland

# Traffic Lights for COPD



NO LIFE HALF LIVED

## About COPD

**Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or COPD is the name given to a group of health conditions that cause long-term damage to your airways. In COPD, your airways are narrowed. This makes it harder for air to move freely in and out of your lungs. COPD includes:**

**Chronic bronchitis:** long-term inflammation of your airways leading to the production of too much mucus.

**Emphysema:** damage to the air sacs in your lungs affecting your lungs' ability to transfer oxygen into your bloodstream.

Sometimes your COPD can suddenly get worse. This is called a flare-up or exacerbation. In some cases, medical treatment is needed as soon as possible to prevent further damage to your lungs.

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## Further support

Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland offers a range of support for people living with COPD. This includes:

- Confidential information and support from the Advice Line nurses
- Printed and online information about chest conditions
- An air quality & weather text alert service
- Support groups for people living with a long-term chest condition

To find out more: call the Advice Line nurses on **0808 801 0899**, visit **[www.chss.org.uk/copd](http://www.chss.org.uk/copd)** or email **[adviceline@chss.org.uk](mailto:adviceline@chss.org.uk)**.

Scottish Charity (no SC018761)

## My information

My name: ..... Date: .....

### My respiratory nurse

Name: ..... Number: .....

### My GP

Name: ..... Number: .....

Emergency GP number: .....

NHS 24 number: 111 .....

### For oxygen therapy users only

My normal oxygen saturation level is: .....

My prescribed oxygen rate is: .....

## About this leaflet

This leaflet helps you to better understand your COPD and know what to do if you become unwell. Discuss the traffic light system first with your GP or respiratory nurse before using it and make sure you know what to do if you have a flare-up.

If you already have your own self-management plan, the traffic lights do not replace it and you should continue to use the plan.

# I FEEL AT MY BEST



You are in the Green Zone when your COPD is stable and you feel at your best.

Out of 10, I feel this breathless at night: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

I can climb this number of steps without stopping: .....

I can walk this far without stopping: From ..... to .....

These things make my breathing worse: .....

My sputum (the mucus, phlegm or spit you cough up) is this colour:



I cough up this amount of sputum (in tsp or tbsp): .....

My appetite is normally: .....

If your symptoms are in the Green Zone it means that they are under control. You should continue with your usual medication and your breathing and chest clearance exercises as normal.

# I FEEL I AM GETTING WORSE



You are in the Amber Zone if you feel your symptoms are getting worse and you don't feel OK.

When you are in the Amber Zone you may feel like:

- You are having to use your blue (reliever) inhaler more often
- You have a new cough or you are coughing more
- You are more short of breath and more wheezy than normal
- You are coughing up more sputum or you are not coughing up sputum when you usually do
- Your sputum has changed colour and looks greener
- Your appetite is less than normal
- You have new ankle swelling or your ankle swelling is worse than normal
- You have less energy or feel more tired than normal

The Amber Zone means you should:

- Increase the use of your blue (reliever) inhaler
- Rest more often
- Use your breathing techniques
- Use your chest clearing exercises
- Drink plenty of fluids and avoid getting dehydrated
- Eat small amounts often

Keep monitoring how you feel. If your symptoms improve, continue with your usual medication and your breathing and chest clearance exercises as normal. If your symptoms do not improve after 24-48 hours, go to the instructions for the Red Zone.

# I FEEL MUCH WORSE



You are in the Red Zone if you have been in the Amber Zone for 24-48 hours and you are not feeling any better. It is now time to alert your GP or respiratory team contact.

GP phone number: .....

Respiratory team phone number: .....

Emergency GP phone number: .....

Out-of-hours phone number: call NHS 24 on 111

If you feel too unwell to wait for the doctor or nurse to phone back, call 999.

You may need to start the medication in your Rescue (home treatment) Pack if you have one. If you do start your Rescue Pack, contact your GP or respiratory team contact to let them know.

- **Rescue Pack antibiotic:** .....  
Start your antibiotics if your sputum has increased or has changed colour.
- **Rescue Pack prednisolone (steroid) dose:** .....  
Start your steroids if you are significantly more breathless.

In the RED ZONE you need to look out for the following serious symptoms:

- You are extremely breathless or having difficulty breathing
- You feel drowsy or confused
- You have chest pain
- You have a high temperature

If you have any of these symptoms and/or you are not feeling better after 48 hours of taking the medication in your Rescue Pack, contact your GP or NHS 24 urgently or call 999 for an ambulance.