



Northumbria Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

Learning from the pandemic: Avoiding COPD flare-ups and hospital admissions

Developed by Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

With the Northumbria Lung Research Patient and Public
Involvement Group, and Northumberland and North Tyneside
CCGs

PROOF

This document contains important information for patients with COPD about reducing the spread of all respiratory viruses.

Thank you for everything you have done to protect yourself and others during the Covid-19 pandemic. Simple steps like hand-washing, wearing face coverings and keeping your distance from others limit the spread of Covid -19, but they also reduce the spread of other respiratory viruses that cause COPD flare-ups.

In Northumberland and North Tyneside, since the pandemic started, we have seen a lot fewer exacerbations (flare-ups) of COPD and 43% fewer COPD hospital admissions compared to the previous year. This was not because people were reluctant or afraid to attend hospital, but rather a real fall in COPD flare-ups and admissions. The decrease in flareups was also greater than that seen with inhalers and other COPD treatments.

You should follow government guidance on Covid-19, **but we want you to be physically active and to keep up social contacts - as safely as possible.**

“Make sure you exercise each day, even when sitting. It’s so important.”

COPD patient in their 60s

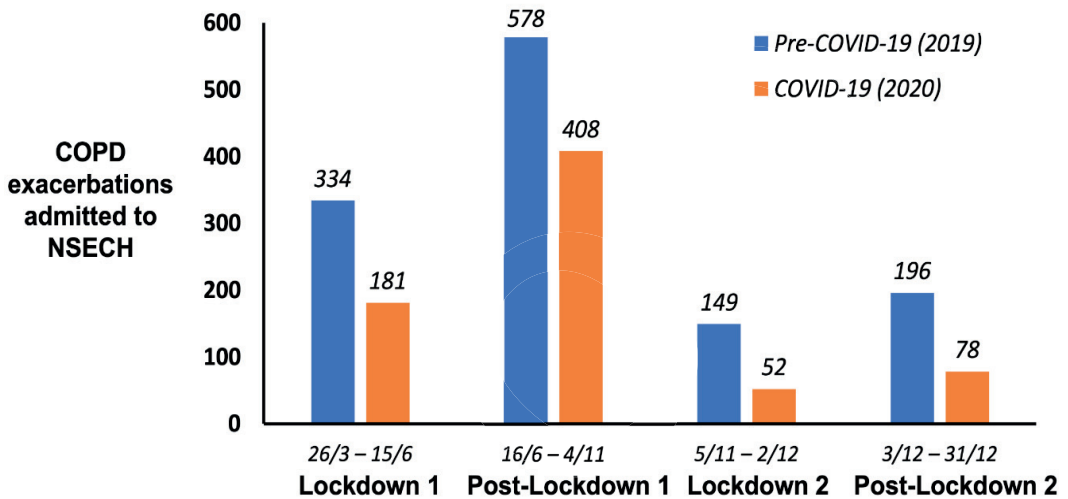
Actions you can take

Consider taking the following steps to help avoid COPD flare-ups and hospital admissions. This is most important between December and March (peak flu season). **Please also accept all vaccines offered to you - flu, pneumonia and Covid.**

- Avoid contact with people with active respiratory infections, including simple coughs and colds.
- If someone you live with has a respiratory infection, consider keeping to separate rooms and wash your hands often. In shared areas, disinfect surfaces and wear a mask (including the person who is ill).
- More frequent hand-washing, particularly around young children (highest risk of infection).
- Wear a mask on public transport and in indoor spaces (particularly when crowded and poorly ventilated).
- When choosing to socialise, favour well-ventilated, uncrowded spaces, ideally outside.
- Try to maintain distance from others in public spaces and indoors.

What does the data show?

The graph below shows the change in COPD admissions to the Northumbria Specialist Emergency Care Hospital (NSECH) in Cramlington during lockdown and post-lockdown periods in 2020 compared to similar periods in 2019.



There is still a clear benefit with simple precautions post-lockdown

- There were 43% fewer hospital admissions for COPD flare-ups during the pandemic in 2020 compared to the previous year.
- If the fall in admissions had been because patients were afraid to attend hospital, we would have expected patients arriving in hospital to be more unwell. This was not the case.
- Among patients admitted with a COPD flare-up, there was no increase in need for ventilation (extra breathing support) or deaths (both in hospital and within 30 days of going home).
- This was a true fall in COPD flare-ups and admissions and a similar reduction in hospital admissions for COPD flare-ups has been reported in other countries.

Additional information

General information about COPD:

<https://www.blf.org.uk/support-for-you/copd>

Videos on breathing control and sputum clearance:

<https://tinyurl.com/breathingcontrol>

<https://tinyurl.com/sputumclearance>

Inhaler technique:

<https://RightBreathe.com>

Alternative Formats

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on 03 44 811 8118.

Other sources of information

NHS 111

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx

NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

www.nice.org.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone: 0800 032 0202

Text: 07815 500015

Email: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

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General Enquiries 03 44 811 8111

www.northumbria.nhs.uk



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