

Spirometry: A Must Have Test

To help you breathe better, your doctor needs to know how well your lungs are working. One way to find out is with spirometry. This test provides useful information that can guide your treatment plan by determining whether your lung function has changed. A spirometry test is recommended every two years. Here are three common questions you may have about this test:

- > **What does it measure?** Spirometry gauges how much air you can inhale and exhale. It also measures how fast you can exhale.
- > **How is it done?** You take a deep breath and then blow out as hard as you can into a machine that records the results.
- > **Why do it?** Spirometry helps your doctor know if your asthma or COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease) is well controlled. If the results show that your treatment isn't working as well as it should, then your provider can adjust your medication. If you have questions about whether your SelectHealth plan covers this test, please contact Member Services.

Sources: American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology; National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute; Coffey Communications



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COPD Exacerbations: Things to Watch

Everyone has good days and bad days. If you have Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), those bad days could be a sign there's more going on. It could be the start of a COPD exacerbation, or flareup.

How can you know if you're having a flareup? Consider these questions:

- > Are you having a hard time breathing, but no change in activity?
- > Have you raised your oxygen levels?
- > Are you reaching for a quick-relief medication more often?
- > Are you making more mucus? Has it changed color, grown thicker, or had a bad odor?
- > Are your ankles swollen?
- > Have you been feeling tired for two or more days?

WHAT CAN CAUSE FLAREUPS?

A flareup could be triggered by viruses, illnesses like the flu, smoking, or even seasonal allergies. There are also times when there is no direct known cause. Talk to your doctor if you have new or worsening symptoms. For mild cases, antibiotics or other

medications, such as steroid inhalers, may be prescribed.

Signs of a serious COPD flareup can be fever, headache, feelings of confusion, slurred speech, and chest pain. If you have any of these symptoms, call your doctor. It could be a sign of a serious problem.

With a little extra care you can lower your risk of flareups, and have more good days in the future.

- > Wash your hands often
- > Avoid people with colds, the flu, and of course, COVID-19
- > Drink plenty of fluids
- > Eat well, exercise often, and get a good night's sleep
- > Keep an eye on oxygen levels
- > Keep windows closed to keep allergens out

References: "What Is an Exacerbation or Flare Up?" COPD Foundation, www.copdfoundation.org/Learn-More/I-am-a-Person-with-COPD/What-is-an-Exacerbation.aspx; What Are the Different Types of COPD? Healthline, 2021, www.healthline.com/health/copd/types-of-copd; National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute; "How to Avoid Hospitalization for COPD Exacerbation." WebMD, WebMD, 2021, www.webmd.com/lung/copd/copd-avoid-hospitalization.

COPD and Summertime

With summer comes better weather and more time outdoors. The warmer weather and seasonal allergens can make things hard for those with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD).

In warm weather, our bodies must work harder to stay cool, which means we need more oxygen. If you have COPD, try these tips to help keep an eye on your symptoms and stop flareups:

- > **Spend Time Indoors:** Spending time indoors can keep you from feeling too warm. This can help make it easier to breathe. To make the most of your time inside, think about getting a portable AC or air filtration system. If you live in a humid place, try a dehumidifier.
- > **Keep Hydrated:** Health experts suggest drinking eight 8-oz glasses of water each day. It can be hard to track water intake throughout the day. Try starting the morning with 1-2 glasses of water and filling a bottle with the amount you want to drink each day.
- > **Stay Away From/Prepare for Allergens:** Summertime plants, allergens, and air pollution can make COPD symptoms worse. Talk to your doctor about allergy medications or inhalers that can help keep you safe during the summer.
- > **Stay Active:** The heat and humidity can make it hard to do many things outdoors. There are still many fun things to do inside that may help you protect your lung health. Find new ways to stay healthy and active to reduce shortness of breath.

References: BobG. National Emphysema Foundation (NEF), 2021, www.emphysemafoundation.org/index.php/living-with-copd/97-therapeutic-toolbox-articles/224-managing-copd-in-the-summer; W, Ken. "Hydration and COPD." COPD Foundation, 1 Jan. 2015, www.copdfoundation.org/COPD360social/Community/Questions-and-Answers/Hydration-and-COPD.aspx.





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Please visit selecthealth.org/who-we-are/covid-19-coverage or call Member Services at **800-538-5038** if you have any questions regarding COVID-19 coverage information.