

What Is Maintenance Medicine?

Maintenance medicine is a medicine you take every day, even when you have no COPD symptoms and are breathing fine.

Different maintenance medicines include:

- **Bronchodilators:** taken through an inhaler or nebulizer, or as a pill or capsule. They work by relaxing the muscles around the airways
- **Anti-inflammatories:** usually taken through an inhaler. They work by reducing swelling and mucus production inside the airways
- **Combination medicines:** combine inhaled bronchodilators and anti-inflammatories

Talking about your COPD management goals

It's important to talk with your doctor about your goals. These goals may include:

- Managing your symptoms
- Helping you breathe better
- Improving your physical activity
- Preventing related health complications
- Improving your overall health

How Does Maintenance Medicine Differ From Rescue Medicine?

Maintenance medicine is different from rescue medicine, but does not replace it. Both types of medicine are needed to help manage your COPD. Here are the main differences between maintenance and rescue medicine:



Maintenance Medicine

- Also called long-acting medicine
- Taken every day and lasts up to 24 hours
- Provides longer-term relief
- Used every day to help manage COPD



Rescue Medicine

- Also called short-acting medicine
- May last up to 4 to 6 hours
- Provides temporary relief for sudden symptoms
- Used only when needed as rescue

Did you know?

You can use a rescue inhaler too often.

- If you use your rescue inhaler frequently, ask your doctor if adding a maintenance medicine could help you breathe better
- When you take maintenance medicine as prescribed, you may use your rescue medicine less often
- Maintenance medicine may also help reduce your risk of flare-ups

Questions to ask your doctor

- Is it time to add maintenance medicine to my treatment plan?
- What can I do to keep my COPD from getting worse?
- How can maintenance treatment help manage my COPD?
- Am I relying on my rescue inhaler too much?
- What are the possible side effects of maintenance medicine?

Flare-ups, also known as exacerbations, are when you develop new symptoms or feel your old symptoms worsen.