

Department name

## COPD Virtual Ward

# Information for patients, relatives and carers

### Introduction

#### What is COPD?

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) is a slowly progressive condition affecting the lungs. It includes conditions such as chronic bronchitis, chronic obstructive airways disease, emphysema and chronic asthma. It is usually smoking-related but could also be caused by childhood lung problems, or breathing in certain dusts or chemicals. It can also run in families.

COPD causes breathlessness when doing tasks such as shopping or bathing, and can also cause a cough, phlegm and wheeze. Infections, or changes in outside temperature and pollution, can cause a “flare up” or lung attacks (also known as exacerbations) and often need emergency treatment or assessment in hospital.

#### What is COPD virtual ward?

After assessment and treatment has been started in hospital, many patients with COPD can then be cared for safely and more comfortably at home. The doctors looking after you have referred you for assessment by the ‘ESD virtual ward Service’. This service is for patients with a COPD flare-up, offering safe care at home.

The aim of the service is to allow patients who have come into hospital with COPD to return home sooner than previously possible, but with the support of the specialist virtual ward team who will make contact with you regularly. You are still under the care of a doctor at hospital. As part of this you may be asked to wear a remote monitoring device to check your vital signs such as oxygen saturations and mobility. The hospital team will help set this up and show you how to use it, before you leave the hospital. The virtual ward team will also provide ongoing support in using your device.

#### What happens next?

You will be assessed by a team of COPD specialist nurses, physiotherapists and doctors. They will then recommend the care they feel is best suited for you including what is to be provided for you when you go home. This may consist of:

1. medication such as antibiotics or steroids
2. treatment with nebulised medicines and oxygen as necessary
3. regular checks by a team of nurses who will contact you daily as necessary
4. contact telephone numbers that you can ring 24 hours a day for advice about your breathing
5. information on COPD and related conditions
6. information on stopping smoking (if you need it)
7. a copy of your notes for you to keep at home
8. a patient satisfaction questionnaire
9. a follow up clinic appointment with a consultant when you have recovered.

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## Follow up

You may be offered a virtual assessment by telephone the day you go home or the next day, by one of the nurses or physiotherapists from the team, who will monitor your progress. You may also have a home visit. You will receive phone calls daily or more than once a day for first five days. You will be monitored and/or called for up to 14 days in total. You may also receive in-person visits until you are better. Your case will be discussed with the hospital consultant as needed. If you don't feel better or need to go back to hospital then this will be arranged. The nurses can also offer you support and advice about your COPD treatment. If you have ANY questions, then please ask.

## What do I do if I feel worse?

While you are under the care of the virtual ward team, you can speak to one of the nurses if you have any questions or problems. They are available between 09:00 and 19:00 on 0203 704 3704. After 19:00 the out of hours GP service will be available to help you if needed via 111.

While you are under the care of the virtual ward team you will remain under the care of the hospital consultant. If you do come back into hospital, you should bring all documents given to you by the virtual ward team.

### Contact numbers:

If you or your family/carers have any concerns or questions regarding your current health please contact:

**The virtual ward team between 09:00 and 19:00 on 0203 704 3704**

**The out of hours service after 19:00 on 111**

If you feel progressively unwell, experience more shortness of breath or have chest pain, ring for an ambulance on **999**. Please try to remember to take the medical notes and documents that you have at home with you to hospital.

## What happens when I am better?

When you are well you will be discharged from the virtual ward team to the care of your GP. An appointment will be made for you either with your local community respiratory team or in the hospital respiratory department; this should happen within six weeks. You will also be given a COPD management plan which explains how to recognise the early warning signs of a 'flare up' and how best for you to manage it. You can be given the telephone number of the community respiratory team to ring them in the future if you have problems with your breathing.

## How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3312 7777** (10.00 – 16.00, Monday to Friday). You can also email PALS at [imperial.pals@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.pals@nhs.net) The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

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Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street  
London W2 1NY

Email: [ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net](mailto:ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net)

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

## Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team:  
[imperial.communications@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.communications@nhs.net)

## Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: [www.imperial.nhs.uk](http://www.imperial.nhs.uk)

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