

COPD Rescue Pack – What is it? & how you can help

Information for Community Pharmacies – South Devon and Torbay CCG

On dispensing medication for patients with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), please be aware some medications prescribed; supply of antibiotic and corticosteroid, may be for the patient to have at home for use in an acute exacerbation as part of their self-management strategy.

This is recommended in the NICE clinical guideline for COPD for people at risk of an exacerbation of their COPD.¹ Locally we are terming this stand-by supply of antibiotics and corticosteroids a “COPD Rescue Pack”.

Anecdotally, it has been reported, following supply of a COPD Rescue Pack patients may later become confused as to what the medications were prescribed for and therefore take them inappropriately. In addition, patients may not remember to order a further supply of stand-by medication when they have recovered. To help support patients take these medications more effectively, COPD Rescue Pack patient information leaflets have been developed to accompany prescriptions.

In line with the local formulary the **first line** choice of **COPD Rescue Pack** antibiotic is amoxicillin:

Amoxicillin 500mg capsules COPD Rescue Pack antibiotic capsules,
1 three times daily for 5 days. For COPD flare-up.

Prednisolone 5mg tablets COPD Rescue Pack steroid tablets, 6 immediately
and then 6 in the morning for a total of 7 days. For COPD flare-up.

An alternate COPD Rescue Pack patient information leaflet has been developed for the antibiotic choice doxycycline:

Doxycycline 100mg capsules COPD Rescue Pack antibiotic capsules, one
capsule twice a day for 5 days. For COPD flare-up.

Prednisolone 5mg tablets COPD Rescue Pack steroid tablets, 6 immediately
and then 6 in the morning for a total of 7 days. For COPD flare-up.

IMPORTANT: *the COPD Rescue Pack Information Leaflets are only relevant to prescriptions for standby supplies of antibiotic and corticosteroid prescribed as described here, this is due to the specific nature of information contained regarding the drugs and their doses.*

If considered appropriate for the patient, the prescriber will give them a “COPD Rescue Pack Information Leaflet” to accompany their prescription. This leaflet should stay together with these dispensed medications until they are required.

Patients should also have a COPD self-management plan developed with the clinician managing their COPD. A patient's COPD self-management plan should explain when they should commence their stand-by prednisolone +/- antibiotic. The COPD Rescue Pack information leaflet supports the principle of identifying an exacerbation and therefore when to commence the stand-by prednisolone, in addition to checking sputum colour and commencing the stand-by antibiotic if the sputum has changed from its normal colour. It is very important patients know that if they experience an exacerbation of COPD, and start their stand-by prednisolone and/or antibiotics, that they then **must** advise their GP or practice nurse as soon as possible.

How you can help

When dispensing medications identified as a COPD rescue pack we suggest the following to help facilitate the patient's optimal use of these medications:

- Dispense as individual labelled boxes with clearly marked expiry dates, containing the medication's patient information leaflets
- Bag the COPD rescue pack medications separately from any other dispensed medication and consider distinctly labelling this bag as "COPD Rescue Pack"
- Advise the patient to keep their "COPD Rescue Pack Information Leaflet" with the COPD Rescue Pack medications: inside the bag or securely attached to the outside
- Ensure the patient is counselled effectively on the use of their "COPD Rescue Pack"
- On commencing their rescue pack medications, it is important patients know to contact their GP or COPD nurse to let them know they are less well and have started these medications
- Consider a targeted MUR

For information, copies of the COPD Rescue Pack Information Leaflets are attached to this memo and are also available on the South Devon and Torbay CCG website [link to follow](#)

Background information

COPD is the second most common cause of emergency admission to hospital nationally, however, there is robust evidence that many admissions are avoidable.¹ Readmissions are also a significant problem in COPD; of all emergency readmissions to hospital COPD is the 5th most common cause nationally.¹

The NICE guideline for COPD recommends: Patients at risk of having an exacerbation of COPD should be given a course of antibiotic and corticosteroid tablets to keep at home for use as part of a self-management strategy.² This reflects good evidence that prompt therapy in exacerbations results in less lung damage, faster recovery and fewer admissions (and subsequent readmissions) to hospital.¹

Please note, it is acknowledged that not all patients will be eligible or appropriate for the provision of antibiotic and corticosteroid for self-treatment at home.³

References

1. Department of Health. An Outcomes Strategy for COPD and Asthma: NHS Companion Document. May 2012, Department of Health
2. NICE. Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease: Management of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease in adults in primary and secondary care. NICE, 2010
3. NICE. Quality Standard for Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease. July 2011
4. Royal College of Physicians. The National COPD Audit 2008. Royal College of Physicians, London
5. COPD Rescue Pack Information Leaflet v1.0, April 2012. Plymouth Area Joint Formulary <http://bit.ly/PAJFcopd>