

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) drugs

The right drug can help you manage your chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) symptoms and avoid lung infections and airway irritations. That's why we look at the strongest clinical studies when we choose COPD drugs for our drug list. We look at how well COPD drugs work for our members like you. Then, we make sure they are affordable.



COPD limits how much air you can breathe

COPD is a lung disease that reduces the amount of air that flows into and out of the lungs. Smoking is the most common cause of this disease. If you smoke, quitting is the best way to slow down damage to the lungs.

The most common symptoms of COPD — especially when walking or working — are shortness of breath, wheezing and coughing. The symptoms usually get worse as you get older.

Medicine can help you feel better and breathe more easily

There is no cure for COPD, but there are medicines to help relieve symptoms and keep the disease from getting worse. Drugs called bronchodilators are inhaled and can help you breathe more easily. They work by opening the airways in the lungs. Some of these drugs work quickly, but don't last very long. Others take more time to work, but last longer. People with COPD may need both types of drugs.

One drug for COPD can be taken by mouth. It eases inflammation or swelling in the lungs. That reduces the amount of mucus in the lungs and helps you cough less.

Your health plan includes many drugs that treat COPD symptoms

Here's a step-by-step look at how COPD drugs are chosen for the drug list — the list of prescription drugs included in your plan. Our approach is different because we put clinical review first. Then we look at how much drugs cost.

Step 1: Clinical review and rating

First, doctors and pharmacists — who are not our employees — look at the scientific research on COPD drugs. They use a detailed report prepared by our pharmacists to review the strongest clinical studies. This report starts with information from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) about each drug's approved uses, dosages and safety. The pharmacists then go beyond this data and figure out how well each COPD drug works, how it compares to the other COPD drugs, and how each drug may help people to do everyday tasks at home, school or work.

The doctors and pharmacists also look at information that shows how these drugs work in real life, not just in drug studies. Finally, they look at all the data to rate which drugs will work well for members like you.

Here's what the research says about COPD drugs:

- People usually start taking short-acting inhaled drugs in the early stages of COPD. These drugs are also used as needed to treat symptoms. As symptoms get worse, people may start using long-acting inhaled drugs every day.
- In drug studies, Spiriva was found to be better than Atrovent at stopping symptoms, lung infections and airway irritations. Spiriva is a long-acting drug that only has to be taken once a day.
- Tudorza is a FDA-approved drug that works in the same way as Spiriva. It has to be taken twice a day. More studies are needed to see if it will work as well as Spiriva.
- Arcapta, Anoro Ellipta and Breo Ellipta are newer, long-acting inhaled drugs that only need to be taken once a day. More studies are needed to determine how well they work in COPD.
- Some people have a hard time using inhalers. They may need to use a device called a nebulizer to get more of the drug into their lungs. Nebulizers spray a mist of the drug through a mask and into the lungs.
- Daliresp can be added to long-acting inhaled drugs if you continue to have symptoms. It is a tablet that can be taken by mouth once a day.

We're helping people like you make good choices about taking COPD drugs

We found that our members who were taking Spiriva went to the hospital less often than members taking Atrovent or Combivent inhalers. That means that for most people, Spiriva is better at controlling symptoms and preventing lung infections and airway inflammation.

The Spiriva inhaler is included on the drug list even though it costs more to your plan than the Atrovent and Combivent inhalers. That way you have a choice of drugs that work well.

Step 2: Cost review

Next we use the drug ratings from the first step. We look at how often doctors choose our highest-rated drugs for patients. Then we review drug costs to make sure quality medicines are affordable for you. We consider drug costs only after we've looked at how well the drugs work.

Step 3: Choosing drugs

We choose COPD drugs for the drug list that are safe, work well and offer great value. We decided these drugs in the chart below should be added to the drug list. Your cost will be lower if a drug from the lower cost or medium cost column is selected. Always work with your doctor to select the drug that is the right choice for you.

Visit these websites to learn more:

American Lung Association: lungusa.org
Get information on treatment options for COPD and ways to protect your health.

COPD International: copd-international.com
Join the interactive support network for caregivers and patients with COPD.

Drug type	Lower cost (generics) drugs	Medium cost drugs	Higher cost drugs
Inhaled short-acting drugs (Provide relief for a few hours per dose)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ipratropium (generic Atrovent) nebulizer solution • ipratropium/albuterol (generic DuoNeb) nebulizer solution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atrovent HFA (ipratropium) inhaler • Combivent Respimat (ipratropium/albuterol) inhaler • ProAir HFA (albuterol) inhaler • Ventolin HFA (albuterol) inhaler 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atrovent (ipratropium) nebulizer solution • DuoNeb (ipratropium/albuterol) nebulizer solution • Proventil HFA (albuterol) inhaler
Inhaled long-acting drugs (Provide relief for 12-24 hours)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advair Diskus (salmeterol/fluticasone) inhaler • Advair HFA (salmeterol/fluticasone) inhaler • Foradil (formoterol) inhaler • Perforomist (formoterol) nebulizer solution • Serevent (salmeterol) inhaler • Spiriva (tiotropium) inhaler • Symbicort (formoterol/budesonide) inhaler 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anoro Ellipta (vilanterol/umeclidinium) inhaler • Arcapta (indacaterol) inhaler • Breo Ellipta (vilanterol/fluticasone) inhaler • Brovana (arformoterol) nebulizer solution • Tudorza Pressair (aclidinium) inhaler
Long-acting drug taken by mouth (Taken once per day)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daliresp (roflumilast) tablet



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