

National pathway to prevent unnecessary admissions to hospital for COPD

The steps to managing COPD exacerbations in the community

Clinical Pathway

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STEP 1 INFORMATION: DIAGNOSIS

1 Confirm diagnosis

Consider other potential causes of increased breathlessness:

- Pneumothorax
- Pulmonary embolism
- Decompensated heart failure
- Asthma

STEP 1: DIAGNOSIS

Confirm Diagnosis

Check the NHS Wales COPD self-management App to confirm diagnosis and normal values



If patient does not have evidence of COPD consider alternative pathway

STEP 2 INFORMATION: CLINICAL ASSESSMENT

1 Clinical assessment

Causes of exacerbation: Infective

- Increased sputum purulence
- Increased sputum volume
- Increased dyspnoea

Non-infective

e.g. viral, pollution, anxiety

Pneumonia

Fever, chest signs

STEP 2: CLINICAL ASSESSMENT

Any of:

- Sudden onset severe breathlessness
- Confused / reduced conscious level
- Frailty / Unable to cope at home/inadequate support
- Unstable co-morbidities (e.g. worsening oedema/ blood sugars)
- Hypotension / suspected sepsis
- Respiratory rate >30
- Pulse rate >120
- BP <100 systolic
- SpO2 >5% below patient baseline
- Pyrexia with respiratory or cardiovascular compromise

Any of the above?

NO

YES

REFER

Attending paramedic to refer to local named respiratory contact for the Health Board

It is the responsibility of the Health Board to ensure patient is seen within 24 hours of referral

TRANSFER TO HOSPITAL



More information at
icst.info/national-pathway-to-prevent-unnecessary-admissions-to-hospital-for-COPD

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