

# Managing your other health conditions with COPD

If you have COPD and are diagnosed with any other health conditions below, learn how they will affect your symptoms and what you can do to treat them

## Atrial fibrillation<sup>1</sup>

### Effect with COPD

Irregular heartbeat causes breathlessness and fluttering sensation in the chest. Rapid heart rate can cause fatigue. Increased risk of having a stroke.

### Action

Ask your healthcare professional to check your pulse and heart rate regularly; see healthcare professional within 3 days if you feel your heart rate is too fast. Anticoagulant medication stops your blood clotting as quickly, and other medicines can control heartbeat.



## Ischaemic heart disease<sup>2</sup>

### Effect with COPD

Can worsen breathlessness, cough and wheezing; takes longer to recover from flare-ups; increases the risk of having a further heart attack or stroke; can cause the heart to work less well causing swelling of the legs and fluid in the lungs.

### Action

Maintain your breathing, exercise levels and muscle strength by taking the medicines you are offered, eating a healthy balanced diet, and staying active.



## Inflammatory arthritis<sup>3</sup>

### Effect with COPD

Can cause inflammation in the lungs, increase breathlessness and reduce muscle strength.

### Action

Take the vaccinations you are offered. Medicines for inflammatory arthritis can weaken the immune system, so have regular blood tests to check liver and kidney function. Pain relief and physiotherapy can help joint pain, allowing you to stay active.



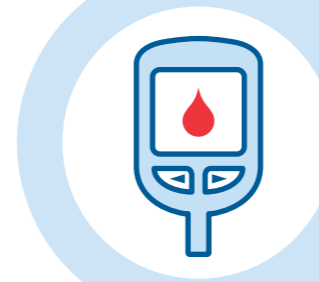
## Diabetes mellitus<sup>4</sup>

### Effect with COPD

High blood sugar makes the airways sensitive to irritants, causes damage to the structure of the lungs, and increases inflammation and risk of chest infections.

### Action

Eat a healthy diet and avoid foods with a high sugar content. Maintain a safe, healthy weight. Have regular checks-ups to keep your blood sugar levels under control.



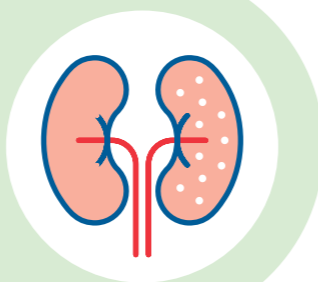
## Chronic kidney disease<sup>5</sup>

### Effect with COPD

Increases inflammation, including in the lungs; increases breathlessness and reduces ability to exercise; can also reduce muscle strength.

### Action

Follow your healthcare professional's advice and take the recommended medicines to control your blood pressure. Ask for a blood test to check your kidneys at least once a year.



## Hypertension<sup>2,4</sup>

### Effect with COPD

Increases the risk of a heart attack or stroke.

### Action

Ask your healthcare professional for regular blood pressure checks (every 6 months, if under control). Ask if you can get your own equipment to check readings at home.



## Obesity<sup>6</sup>

### Effect with COPD

Worsens breathlessness, makes activity harder, can stop lungs from fully filling with air, increases fats in blood and causes resistance to insulin. Increased risk of ischaemic heart disease and diabetes.

### Action

Talk to your healthcare professional to come up with a weight-loss plan that works for you, including a healthy, balanced diet avoiding high-calorie foods, increased activity, and maintaining a safe and healthy weight.



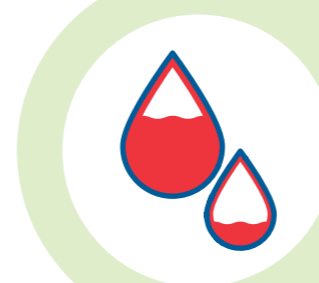
## Anaemia<sup>7</sup>

### Effect with COPD

Makes you more breathless and can cause tiredness and fatigue, low oxygen levels and iron deficiency.

### Action

Eat a healthy and balanced diet, with plenty of vitamins, minerals and iron. If you feel more tired or breathless than usual, ask your healthcare professional if you should have a blood test for anaemia.



## Anxiety/depression<sup>8</sup>

### Effect with COPD

Reduced activity and motivation levels and increased tiredness. Increased breathlessness and flare-up risk.

### Action

Regularly assess your emotions, and be open with your healthcare professional and support network about how you feel. Cognitive behavioural therapy, mindfulness, meditation and possibly medication can help to lift your mood. See IPCRG COPD Magazine issue 2 for more.



## Stroke<sup>9</sup>

### Effect with COPD

Weakens muscles, making it harder to cough up phlegm. Can cause sleep problems, increase the chance of choking and also chest infections.

### Action

Ask your healthcare professional how much activity you can do and whether to see a physiotherapist. If you have problems swallowing, a speech and language therapist might be able to recommend safe foods and drinks.

