

Patient Information Leaflet for the Virtual Ward

Introduction

This leaflet will provide information on how we will support you to monitor and manage your COPD condition at home. This will be done by monitoring and recording your oxygen levels using a pulse oximeter. The Virtual Ward will support and advise you on self-management and treatment of your long term condition whilst remaining at home.

Our aim is to help to support you at home and reduce the risk of you requiring unplanned or frequent hospital admissions.

About your illness

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, typically referred to as COPD, is a common and preventable disease characterised by persistent respiratory symptoms and airflow limitation that is due to airway and or alveolar abnormalities usually caused by exposure to noxious stimuli (smoking cigarettes is one of the main causes of COPD). COPD can be well managed at home with a range of healthy lifestyle changes, medical advice and support and a range of medications.

Typical/ common symptoms of COPD:

- Increased breathlessness (Dyspnoea) - usually progressive and persistent
- Persistent cough
- Sputum production
- Persistent wheeze
- Recurrent winter bronchitis (chest infections)

Lesson common symptoms of COPD:

- Weight loss
- Tiredness
- Oedema (swelling) of the ankles

These symptoms are known to gradually get worse, making every day activities of living much more difficult to manage.

You may have recently had a hospital stay because of your COPD condition, and you have now been discharged to continue with your treatment plan at home. This may involve having nurses visiting you at home to support you with administration of medication such as intravenous antibiotics, telephone and video consultations to obtain oxygen readings and or observe your inhaler techniques to optimise your management plan. To find out more visit www.patient.info/chest-lungs/chronic-obstructive-pulmonary-disease-leaflet

Why are you being monitored?

You have been referred to the virtual ward to facilitate your discharge home safely and/ or prevent a hospital admission. The purpose of the Virtual Ward is for the nursing team to monitor your COPD symptoms, identify an individualised management plan to meet your needs and also monitor your oxygen levels during your recovery. This may involve the need for face to face nursing visits at your home, and video/ telephone consultations.

How long will you be monitored for?

You will be monitored for a minimum of 7 days, however should you require additional support and treatment, this may be extended and will be discussed with you as part of your management plan.

Will I need any other treatment?

If you have been discharged from hospital on oxygen therapy, this will need to continue as advised until your observations are stable and within your target range set by the Consultant. The nurse visiting you at home will advise you on your progress each day and whether any further treatment or observations will be required. If you require Oxygen for a short period of time, the nursing team will support the reduction of this safely and advise you on how this will be done. Once your COPD condition and symptoms have stabilised, the nursing team will discharge you from the virtual ward. Whilst on the virtual ward caseload, the nursing team will ensure you are aware of what medication/ inhalers/ nebulisers you are on and how to take them and when, they will also ensure you have a good inhaler technique and offer support if needed with a spacer. In some cases, you may be prescribed a Rescue pack. This will be a course of antibiotics and steroids, to support you should your condition deteriorate to allow you to commence treatment at the earliest opportunity and reduce the risk of additional complications.

What will happen when you are being monitored?

A Health Care Professional from the virtual ward will conduct a telephone or video consultation and complete an assessment to record your baseline symptoms and oxygen saturation levels. The Health Care Professional will either set you up on a mobile app called LUSCII, which allows you to record your readings yourself and submit via the app and allow the nurse to prompt and review your readings/ symptoms or you will be provided with a diary and it will be explained how to record your symptoms manually. It is important that you record your oxygen levels, blood pressure, respiratory rate and heart rate twice per day. You will be contacted by the virtual ward up to two times a day to report your readings. The readings you report will determine if someone will need to assess you at home or if any changes to your treatment are needed.

We will aim to contact you between the times listed below:

First Recording

Between 9:00 - 10:00 am

Second Recording

Between 4:00 – 5:00 pm

How to use your pulse oximeter?

A pulse oximeter is a simple device. It measures heart rate and level of oxygen in your blood quickly and painlessly.

- Remove nail polish and acrylic nails on the finger that you will be using for measuring as this can adversely affect the result.
- Please wash your hands in warm water to ensure your fingers are clean and warm as cold fingers, poor circulation or low blood pressure will affect readings.
- Please take the reading after you have been resting for at least 5 minutes.
- Rest your hand on your chest at heart level and hold still.
- Switch the pulse oximeter on and place it on your finger. It works best on your middle or index finger. It should not be used on your ear.
- Please do not raise your arm or squeeze the probe as it can affect the readings.
- Press the button to turn on.
- Ensure there is an indicator on the oximeter confirming a regular waveform on the display.

The saturation probe will take time to settle on the actual reading, so please allow for this when monitoring. Keep the oximeter in place for at least a minute, or longer if the reading keeps changing. Record the highest result once the reading has not changed for at least 5 seconds.

Your first measurement is your baseline and will be taken by the Health Care Professional that first sees you. This should be recorded in your diary along with future readings at the times that you have been advised. Take extra measurements if you feel there has been a change in the way you feel and be sure to report any changes to your symptoms and general condition.

What else do I need to record?

Please also record the following information as well, as it helps us to understand how you are.
Sputum production – Please make a note of the colour and consistency of the sputum and how often you are producing this.

Breathing/Wheeze – Count how many times you take a breath in a minute which is one count for breathing in and out.

Temperature – If you have a thermometer at home, please make a note of the reading.

Feeling Worse/Same/Better – This is your overall sense of how well or unwell you are feeling compared to yesterday. This could be that you feel confused, depressed, have memory problems, increase in cough, more breathless, and lightheaded or if you have developed any chest pains.

As long as your oxygen level and breathing is normal you do not need to contact the Hospital, Service, GP or NHS. They will contact you at the agreed times to collect your readings.

If unsure, please contact the virtual ward team on the number provided who can offer assurances and advice.

What do I do if I begin to feel worse?

If your oxygen levels drop below your normal target range contact the Virtual Ward on 07917919837 or 07917919840 immediately. If you cannot get through at the first attempt, then dial 999.

If you do begin to feel worse and wish to speak to a member of staff, please contact the Virtual Ward on **07917919837** or **07917919840**. This number operates 24 hours per day, this number can be your first point of contact. You will need to have your diary to hand when you call so that we can establish what your recordings have been leading up to your change in condition.

What happens when I am discharged?

When your oxygen levels have stabilised and within your set target range or our team decides that you no longer require monitoring. We will call you to confirm this, outlining any future care plans. A discharge notification with a summary of your virtual ward admission will be sent to your GP. We know that patients who are diagnosed with COPD may benefit from a period of rehabilitation and recovery. If necessary, we can refer you for ongoing support from the Pulmonary Rehabilitation Team. We will also arrange for return of the Pulse Oximeter.

Returning the Pulse Oximeter

- Please wash your hands with soap and water
- Clean the pulse oximeter with an antibacterial wipe
- Put it in a clean bag clearly marked with your name and address
- The COPD Virtual Ward team will advise where the device needs to be returned to once you have been discharged

If you have any questions, please contact:

COPD Virtual Ward Team

07917919837 or 07917919840