Under certain conditions, the shortness of breath and coughing caused by COPD can get worse. Healthcare professionals call this an “exacerbation.”

Keeping COPD under control and what to look for:
• More difficulty breathing, shortness of breath, coughing or wheezing.
• A change in the color of your mucus. This may be a sign of infection.

What to do?
• Seek treatment right away. Do not wait for symptoms to get worse – it will take longer for you to return to better health and permanent damage may occur.
• Avoid things that irritate your airways like:
  • Smoking
  • Secondhand smoke from other smokers
  • Dust
  • Chemical fumes
  • Strong odors
  • Pollution
  • Breathing in any non-medical aerosol mist, like from a spray can.
• Keep up with pneumonia and flu shots.
• Avoid others that have a cold or the flu.

What else can you do?
• If you still smoke, quit! This is the single best thing you can do for yourself. Ask your doctor or respiratory therapist about classes, programs and support that is available to help you quit.
• Learn about COPD.
• Learn when and how to properly use inhalers.
• Take your medications as your doctor has prescribed.
• Maintain a proper diet. Eat 5-6 small meals each day instead of three larger meals.