

Inhaled Medications for Long-Term COPD Maintenance

What medications are best for treating COPD?

Long-acting inhaled therapies are the best treatment for COPD because they go straight to the lungs. Doctors recommend long-acting bronchodilators, specifically long-acting beta agonists (LABA) and long-acting muscarinic antagonists (LAMA), for all but the mildest cases. Combining LABA and LAMA can improve lung function, reduce symptoms, and lessen COPD attacks. For patients who also have asthma or severe allergies, a triple therapy of LABA and LAMA plus inhaled corticosteroids (ICS) is recommended.



What are the benefits of long-acting inhaled treatments?

Whether you take one or a combination of medications, benefits include:

- Better symptom control
- Better quality of life
- Improved ability to exercise
- Reduced COPD attacks

Some studies show that combining medications can lead to higher survival rates.



What is compliance and adherence for COPD medication?

To get the benefits, patients must follow their doctor's instructions on which medication to take, how often, and how to use them. Following instructions exactly is called compliance. Patients also need to make lifestyle changes to slow the disease. Patients who take broad responsibility for their treatment are said to be adhering to it. The best results come from patients who both comply and adhere to their treatment plan.

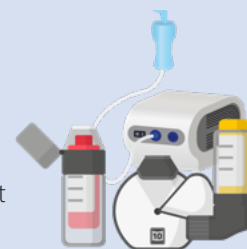


What devices deliver inhaled therapies?

There are four types of devices that can be used to deliver inhaled medications:

- Metered Dose Inhaler (MDI)
- Soft Mist Inhaler (SMI)
- Dry Powder Inhaler (DPI)
- Small Volume Nebulizer

The choice of which one to use depends on what medications are available for each device, how well a patient can use it, how much it costs, and what the patient prefers. Over time, the device may need to change. Your doctor should check how well you are using the device and following your treatment plan at each visit.



How much do inhaled therapies for COPD cost?

Inhalers are covered by Medicare Part D. Using a nebulizer might be less expensive. Medicare Part B covers 80% of the nebulizer, compressor, accessories, and medication. Nebulizers can deliver all three types of inhaled medications for COPD, including LABA, LAMA, and ICS.

