### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON COVID-19 LINKS WITH ASTHMA AND CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE (COPD)

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| **What do people need to know about COVID-19?**                            | • People of all ages can get COVID-19, but older people (60+) and those with pre-existing non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are at higher risk of getting severe symptoms of COVID-19 that can require admission to an intensive care unit (ICU).  
  • These NCDs include cardiovascular diseases (e.g. hypertension, heart attack and stroke), diabetes, chronic respiratory disease (e.g. chronic obstructed pulmonary disease or COPD,) and cancer. |
| **What are signs and symptoms ASTHMA, COPD and COVID?**                    | • ASTHMA: difficult expiration, but temporary and reversible. Present intermittent symptoms with asymptomatic periods in between, worse at night or early morning  
  • COPD: Difficult expiration but permanent. Symptoms starts in middle age or later (usually after age 40), early morning cough at the beginning, persistent cough in the long run and sputum production; but symptoms don’t respond to bronchodilators (e.g salbutamol)  
  • COVID-19: fever, fatigue, headache, cough and sore throat, body aches and difficulty in breathing and accelerated breathing requiring in severe forms admission to an intensive care unit (ICU) |
| **How to differentiate ASTHMA, COPD and COVID-19?**                        | • ASTHMA: past history of chronic lung disease; history of seasonal allergy, eczema and/or allergies since childhood or early adulthood  
  • COPD: past history of chronic lung disease; heavy smoking, with more than 20 cigarettes per day for more than 15 years or heavy and prolonged exposure to burning fossil fuels and to dust in an occupational setting  
  • COVID-19: history of travel to a COVID-19 transmission zone or contact with a COVID-19 confirmed case. The COVID-19 test returns positive. |
| **What to do to avoid complications during COVID-19?**                    | • TAKE medications regularly as prescribed to keep ASTHMA/COPD under control  
  • TREAT all exacerbations to avoid confusion of the respiratory signs of COPD or ASTHMA with those of COVID-19  
  • EXERCISE regularly - briskly walk, or walk at least 30 minutes a day no matter the place  
  • QUIT smoking or any other form of tobacco use. Seek help from a health professional.  
  • AVOID other environmental exposures such as biomass fuel exposure and air pollution; |
<p>| <strong>Are patient with ASTHMA, COPD more likely to get</strong>                       | • People with Asthma or severe COPD are not at higher risk for contracting COVID-19 but they are more susceptible to severe complications if they do |</p>
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| **COVID-19?**                                                           | contract COVID-19 as COVID-19 most commonly affects the respiratory system  
| **Should patients still go to the doctor for scheduled visits even with the COVID-19 pandemic?** | • ASTHMA and COPD treatment is always initiated and monitored by a health care provider or at the health facility  
- TAKE medications regularly as prescribed. This will help to keep the respiratory symptoms under control and avoid acute exacerbations.  
- KEEP 3 months’ supply of prescribed medications |
| **Does medications for ASTHMA or COPD increase the risk of getting sick of COVID-19?** | • No. ASTHMA and COPD medications do not increase the risk of getting Covid-19 or developing severe COVID-19 disease.  
- It is advised to Continue to follow the medication and control plans as prescribed. |
| **What to do to lower the risk from COVID-19?**                         | WHO recommends  
1. Always WEAR a face mask whenever outside the house hold  
2. KEEP a safe distance of at least 1 meter from other persons and avoid touching surfaces with your hands.  
3. WASH hands often with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand rub.  
4. COVER the mouth when coughing (fold of the elbow or disposable handkerchief).  
5. Anyone that feels SICK, should stay at home and call a doctor or local emergency number  
6. Anyone with COVID like symptoms should:  
   • Stay at home, self-isolate and monitor symptoms if minor symptoms, such as a slight cough or a mild fever  
   • Wear a face mask throughout your illness  
   • When attending the health facility, wear a face mask.  
   • Seek immediate medical care if you have difficulty breathing or pain/pressure in the chest.  
More information can be found on COVID-19 and on NCD on the following links:  
[https://www.afro.who.int/health-topics/noncommunicable-diseases](https://www.afro.who.int/health-topics/noncommunicable-diseases) |