

## **Information sheet to the patient**

### **CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE**

#### **What is chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)?**

COPD is a chronic inflammation of the bronchial tubes associated with lung destruction, most often caused by smoking. The direct consequences are difficulty breathing, with the risk of acute exacerbations and/or respiratory infections becoming more frequent.

#### **What is an exacerbation and how to recognize it?**

It is an acute phase of deterioration, with: increased difficulty breathing, coughing and/or sputum, sometimes associated with a change in sputum color or fever.

#### **What are the goals of treatment?**

To improve shortness of breath, to reduce the risk of acute exacerbations and therefore hospitalizations, and to slow down the progression of the disease.

#### **What does the treatment usually consist of?**

- 1) Stop smoking: this is the only way to slow down the disease!
- 2) Vaccination against the flu at the end of each year, and against pneumococcus.
- 3) Inhaled medication (bronchodilators).
- 4) During acute exacerbations: cortisone tablets and antibiotics.
- 5) Rehabilitation program with breathing techniques.
- 6) In more severe cases, home oxygen or surgery.

#### **When should I see a doctor?**

When I have a worsening or the appearance of any of the following symptoms:

- Cough.
- Sputum that is larger or changes color.
- Increased difficulty breathing.
- Fever or flu-like symptoms.

#### **Contact 144 if you have**

- Severe or sudden difficulty breathing.
- Chest pain.
- Faintness or loss of consciousness.

### **What can I do for my health if I have COPD?**

- 1) Take my medication regularly and according to the correct inhalation technique. If I am unsure, ask my doctor.
- 2) Get a flu shot every year.
- 3) Stop smoking and get help from my doctor.
- 4) Hygiene measures, especially in winter: wash your hands regularly, especially after being in public places.
- 5) Visit my GP regularly for check-ups, and as soon as symptoms of an exacerbation appear.
- 6) Stay active as much as possible.

