

# In-Home COPD Care Aims to Prevent Unneeded Hospitalizations This Winter

It's an all-too-common situation for people with advanced COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease): Winter arrives with its colder, dryer air, and their respiratory symptoms take a turn for the worse. If these flare-ups aren't managed effectively and it becomes too difficult for them to breathe, the next step is often a trip to the hospital emergency department.

This scenario is exactly what our clinical COPD program is designed to prevent. "All the nurses across our Home Care team, our Care Management Organization [CMO] and our Hospice program are highly skilled at helping COPD patients and their family members self-manage their condition at home and avoid unnecessary hospitalizations," notes Roisin, a registered nurse and account director with our Home Care program. "Is the patient using their inhaler correctly and keeping it with them at all times? Are they taking their medications as prescribed, and do they have regular medical follow-up visits scheduled? These are all issues our nurses focus on."

If COPD symptoms do crop up, adds Roisin, "we teach families what the symptoms mean and what the family should do when they arise. We also connect families with COPD support services in the community."

This advanced COPD expertise extends to our CMO nurse care managers, who oversee the care of health plan members with complex conditions like COPD. The CMO offers remote monitoring of COPD patients, where their oxygen levels and heart rate are tracked and automatically transmitted to us. The care managers also check in with plan members regularly and can swiftly dispatch a nurse practitioner to the member's home if symptoms escalate.

Finally, if a patient's condition progresses to the point where they decide to enter hospice care, we provides specialized care for patients with a diagnosis of COPD.

Roisin works closely with our business development team and health care providers in the community—including hospitals, clinics, physician offices and home visiting practices—to ensure that patients with COPD and their families have access to our full range of COPD services. The business development team also holds educational sessions at local senior centers, providing advice on COPD management and making community members aware of our COPD expertise.

"We have the same goal across all our COPD protocols and educational activities," adds Roisin. "We want to make sure people with COPD are effectively cared for along a steady continuum, with smooth transitions and no interruptions in care. This is the approach we've always followed at VNS Health: Once we've started working with you, we continue with you throughout your health care journey, wherever that may lead."

Learn more about our home care program

Referring to Home Care

