Asthma and COPD Diagnosis, Inhalers and Exacerbations

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Asthma diagnosis and outpatient control

• Variable symptoms plus objective variable airflow limitation. Normal spirometry between attacks does not exclude asthma.

• GINA 2026 emphasizes ICS-containing treatment for adults/adolescents; avoid SABA-only care.

• An appropriate ICS-formoterol product may be used as anti-inflammatory reliever and/or MART under local protocols.

• Check device technique, adherence, exposure, cost, comorbidity and risk of repeated oral steroids before step-up.

• Provide personalized written action plans and follow-up after an exacerbation.

Acute asthma: severity

• Emergency signs: speech limitation, exhaustion, reduced consciousness, silent chest and severe hypoxemia.

• Normalizing/rising PaCO2 with severe distress suggests fatigue; obtain emergency airway support.

• Emergency bronchodilator, steroids and selected adjuncts under local protocol; do not replace IM epinephrine in anaphylaxis.

COPD diagnosis and maintenance

• Confirm persistent post-bronchodilator obstruction (GOLD FEV1/FVC <0.70; interpret age and clinical context).

• Treatment guided by symptoms and exacerbation risk; LABA/LAMA often central; ICS selected based on exacerbations, eosinophils, asthma and pneumonia risk.

• Smoking cessation, vaccinations, pulmonary rehab, inhaler review and selective long-term oxygen eligibility.

COPD exacerbation and CO2 retention

• Differentiate pneumonia, HF, PE, ACS and pneumothorax from acute COPD exacerbation.

• Controlled oxygen often initially targets 88-92% in CO2-retention risk pending gas/local guidance; never withhold needed oxygen for dangerous hypoxemia.

• Acidemia with elevated PaCO2 may benefit from monitored NIV in appropriate patients; altered consciousness and shock warrant airway evaluation.

• Antibiotics are selective for bacterial features; systemic steroids and bronchodilators require safety monitoring.

GINA 2026: Asthma strategy and summary guide

GOLD 2026: COPD report and pocket guide

Choosing Wisely Canada: Respiratory medicine

Independent examination-preparation content, not clinical care directions or official exam policy. Follow current local guidelines, drug monographs, professional scope and emergency protocols.