REBELLIOUS MEDIC · RESPIROLOGY ALGORITHM SERIES

Management of COPD Exacerbations

GRADE recommendations on corticosteroids, antibiotics, noninvasive ventilation, site of care, and pulmonary rehabilitation timing for COPD exacerbations.

2017 ERS/ATS Guideline
Management of COPD Exacerbations
ERS/ATS Task Force · Eur Respir J
2017;49:1600791

GRADE — Strong — Conditional For — Conditional Against

1 Definition & Scope

Exacerbation	Episode of increasing respiratory symptoms — particularly dyspnoea, cough, and sputum production — plus increased sputum purulence.
Impact	Negatively affects quality of life, accelerates disease progression, and can result in hospitalisation and death.

2 Corticosteroids & Antibiotics

Cond.	**Corticosteroids, ambulatory** — short course (≤14 days) of oral corticosteroids.
Cond.	**Corticosteroids, hospitalised** — oral rather than intravenous, if GI access/function intact.
Cond.	**Antibiotics, ambulatory** — administer, selecting agent by local sensitivity patterns; episodes with purulent sputum most likely to benefit.

3 Noninvasive Ventilation & Site of Care

Strong	**NIV** — hospitalised patients with acute or acute-on-chronic hypercapnic respiratory failure (respiratory acidosis; or severe dyspnoea with accessory muscle use, paradoxical abdominal motion, or intercostal retraction). Strong despite low-confidence evidence — panel consensus favors reduced mortality and intubation need.
Cond.	**Site of care** — home-based management programme (hospital-at-home) for selected ED/hospital presentations without acidotic respiratory failure; favors reduced readmissions and improved patient satisfaction.

4 Pulmonary Rehabilitation Timing

WITHIN 3 WK AFTER DISCHARGE	DURING HOSPITALISATION
Cond. — Initiate — reduces hospital readmissions and improves quality of life.	Cond. — Do NOT initiate — associated with increased mortality.

Format note: "we recommend" = strong; "we suggest" = conditional. Condensed from Table 1 and the ERS/ATS recommendation statements.

Wedzicha JA, Miravitlles M, Hurst JR, et al. Management of COPD Exacerbations: A European Respiratory Society/American Thoracic Society Guideline. *Eur Respir J.* 2017;49(3):1600791.