

Health coaching shown to improve inhaler use among low-income COPD patients

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Over 14 million U.S. adults have chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and many face barriers to using inhaled medications regularly and effectively. Although inhaled medications can improve daily life and long-term outcomes, only 25 to 43% of people with COPD use them regularly. In addition, inhalers can be complex to use—requiring users to master a series of six to eight steps that differ across devices. Physicians and health teams have not yet found a solution to bring COPD medication adherence to the level of other chronic diseases.

In a multi-site randomized controlled trial from the University of California, San Francisco, non-licensed, trained health coaches offered COPD patients one-on-one support in person and by phone, with contact at least every three weeks for nine months. Participants were primarily low-income, African American and Latino men in an urban area.

Those who received health coaching showed significant improvement in adherence to controller inhalers and improved [inhaler technique](#), with 40% of health-coached patients versus 11% of a [control group](#) able to demonstrate effective use of their inhalers after the intervention. Researchers conclude that "improved inhaler technique and adherence are one of multiple factors contributing to long-term COPD outcomes, but their research has confirmed one technique—use of lay health coaches—that may help patients get optimal benefit from their COPD medications.

More information: Rachel Willard-Grace et al. Lay Health Coaching to Increase Appropriate Inhaler Use in COPD: A Randomized Controlled Trial, *The Annals of Family Medicine* (2020). [DOI: 10.1370/afm.2461](https://doi.org/10.1370/afm.2461)

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