Exacerbation Action Plan & Protocol

For use with the Red-Yellow-Green Zone sheets

Purpose
To help chronic disease patients monitor and recognize signs and symptoms of their disease and to collaborate with their provider in its management.

Implementation
This protocol, or Exacerbation Action Plan, has two parts: patient education and the office’s response. It relies on both part to improve outcomes for the patient. The key to implementation is the trigger words on the Red-Yellow-Green sheets: the provider and staff train patients to use the trigger words. Office staff are also trained to recognize the trigger words and respond appropriately.

PART 1: Patient Education
1. EXPLAIN the information in each row of the patient’s Red-Yellow-Green sheet.
2. ASK the patient to repeat the symptoms and instructions in their own words to confirm their understanding.
3. VERIFY the patient’s understanding of:
   Every Day
   • Check these measures and/or symptoms daily.
   Green Zone
   • Key signs of the disease that indicate the patient is stable.
   Yellow Zone
   • Symptoms that mean the patient is approaching a crisis and medical intervention is required.
   • Specific actions the patient should take.
   Red Zone
   • Symptoms that mean collapse is imminent and the patient is in a medical emergency.
   • The Red Zone action plan is always: Call 911 or go to the Emergency Room.
4. TEACH the patient to ask to speak to the Provider or Medical Assistant and to use the trigger words: “I have Congestive Heart Failure” • “I have COPD” • “I have Asthma” • “I have Diabetes”

PART 2: Office staff response
1. LEARN the trigger words from the Red-Yellow-Green sheets: “I have Congestive Heart Failure” • “I have COPD” • “I have Asthma” • “I have Diabetes”
2. GATHER the symptoms that the patient is able to report.
3. REPORT the patient’s call and symptoms to the Provider within the hour.
4. ACT according to your Provider’s guidelines. For example:
   • Schedule an office appointment the same day, or
   • Put the patient on the phone with the Provider, or
   • Execute the Provider’s orders (such as a change in the patient’s medications).
### Asthma Zones

**Every Day**

- **Take your Preventive Medications every day:**
  
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<tr>
<th>Medication</th>
<th>How Much</th>
<th>When</th>
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- **Avoid your Asthma Triggers.**

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**Green Zone**

- **ALL CLEAR – This Zone is Your Goal**
  
  Peak Flow ______to________
  
  Your symptoms are controlled. You should have:
  
  ➔ No shortness of breath.
  ➔ No tightness in your chest.
  ➔ No wheezing.

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**Yellow Zone**

- **CAUTION – This is a Warning Zone if You Have:**
  
  Peak Flow ______to________
  
  ➔ Shortness of breath, or
  ➔ Wheezing, or
  ➔ Tightness in your chest, or
  ➔ Unable to sleep at night, or
  ➔ Increased coughing.

**What to Do:**

1. **Take your “quick relief” medications:**
   
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<tr>
<th>Medication</th>
<th>How Much</th>
<th>When</th>
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2. Repeat Peak Flow 15 minutes after taking your quick relief medication.
   
   If you are not having any signs of asthma and your Peak Flow is in the Green Zone, keep taking your Every Day medications.

3. **But, if you:**
   
   ➔ Still have signs of asthma after taking your quick relief medication, or
   ➔ If your Peak Flow is still in the Yellow Zone, or
   ➔ Need quick relief medications sooner than every 4 hours, or
   ➔ Need quick relief medications every 4 hours for more than 24 hours,
   
   Then, call Primary Care Provider’s office now.
   
   ➔ Tell them: “I have Asthma”
   ➔ Tell them your symptoms (from the ❖ list above)

**Your Primary Care Provider:** __________________________

**Phone Number:** __________________________
EMERGENCY – Danger

If you have:
- A Peak Flow that is below ____________, or
- A lot of difficulty breathing, or
- Trouble talking or walking, or
- Constant coughing, or
- To use your neck and stomach muscles when you breathe, or
- Ribs showing when you breathe, or
- No help from your “quick relief” medications, or
- Your lips or nails are blue.

Then take the following steps:

1) Take your quick relief medication

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<tr>
<th>Medication</th>
<th>How Much</th>
<th>When</th>
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2) Repeat Peak Flow in 5 minutes:
If your peak flow is over 50%, and you feel better, then you are in the **Yellow Zone**. Call your Primary Care Provider and ask what to do next.

BUT IF YOU:
- Are unable to blow your Peak Flow, or
- Have a Peak Flow that is ______ or less, or
- Have wheezing that gets worse even after taking your quick relief medicine, or
- Have breathing that gets faster even after taking your quick relief medicine, or
- Have difficulty walking or talking, or
- Have a hard time breathing and you also have:
  - Flaring nostrils, or
  - Pale skin, or a blue-gray color around lips, or
  - Skin that is cold and sweaty, or
  - Increased coughing that interferes with breathing, or
  - Fast breathing, or
  - Grunting, or
  - Muscles showing in the neck and ribs, or
  - Tensed stomach muscles.

THEN:
You are still in the Red Zone. Call 911 or go to the Emergency Room.
## Congestive Heart Failure Zones

### Every Day

- **Step 1:** Weigh yourself every morning
  - After passing water (urinating),
  - Before eating or drinking,
  - In the same clothes, and
  - Using the same scale, placed on hard flooring, not on a rug.

- **Step 2:** Write down your weight, then
  - Check to see if you gained 2 pounds since yesterday, and
  - Check to see if you gained 3-5 pounds in the last 7 days.

- **Step 3:** Check for swelling in your feet, ankles, legs and stomach.

- **Step 4:** Take your medicine in the amount and at the times ordered.

### Green Zone

**ALL CLEAR – This Zone is Your Goal**

Your symptoms are controlled.

- You have **no** shortness of breath.
- You did **not** gain 2 or more pounds since yesterday.
- You did **not** gain 3-5 pounds in the last 7 days.
- Swelling in your feet, ankles, legs and stomach has **not** increased.

### Yellow Zone

**CAUTION – This is a Warning Zone if You:**

- Have shortness of breath, or
- Find it is harder to sleep lying flat, or need more pillows, or
- Gained 2 pounds or more since yesterday, or
- Gained 3-5 pounds in the last 7 days, or
- Have more swelling of your feet, ankles, legs or stomach, or
- Have increased coughing, or
- Feel dizzy, unusually tired, or that **something is just not right.**

**What to Do:**

1. **Call your Primary Care Provider’s office NOW (day or night)**
2. **Tell them: “I have heart failure”**
3. **Tell them your symptoms (from the ❖ list above)**

   - Your Primary Care Provider: ________________________________
   - Phone Number: ________________________________

### Red Zone

**EMERGENCY – Call 911 or go to the Emergency Room if you have ANY of these symptoms:**

- Shortness of breath while resting, or
- Unrelieved chest pain, or
- Have an Internal Cardioverter Defibrillator (ICD) and you are shocked more than twice.
### COPD Zones

**Every Day**
- Take your medicine in the amount and at the times ordered.
- Use oxygen as prescribed.
- Continue your regular exercise and diet plan.
- Avoid cigarette smoke and inhaled irritants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Green Zone</th>
<th>ALL CLEAR – This Zone is Your Goal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Your symptoms are controlled.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>➤ You can maintain your usual activity and exercise level.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>➤ You have the usual amounts of cough and phlegm or mucus.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>➤ You sleep well at night.</td>
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<td>➤ Your appetite is good.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yellow Zone</th>
<th>CAUTION – This is a Warning Zone if You:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>➤ Are more breathless or wheezy than usual, or</td>
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<td>➤ Have less energy, or</td>
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<td></td>
<td>➤ Have a change in amount or color of mucus you cough up, or</td>
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<td></td>
<td>➤ Need to use your quick-relief inhaler or nebulizer more often, or it is not helping, or</td>
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<td>➤ Are coughing more than usual, or</td>
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<td>➤ Have a fever, or</td>
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<td></td>
<td>➤ Have poor sleep, and your symptoms wake you up, or</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>➤ Your appetite is not good.</td>
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</table>

**What to Do:**
1. Call your Primary Care Provider NOW (day or night)
2. Tell them: “I have COPD”
3. Tell them your symptoms (from the ➤ list above)

Your Primary Care Provider: ________________________________
Phone Number: ________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Red Zone</th>
<th>EMERGENCY – Call 911 or go to the Emergency Room if you have ANY of these symptoms:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>➤ Severe shortness of breath, even while resting, or</td>
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<td>➤ Unable to do any of your normal activities because of breathing, or</td>
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<td>➤ A high fever (over 101 degrees), or</td>
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<td>➤ Feel confused or are very drowsy, or</td>
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<td>➤ Chest pains, or</td>
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<td>➤ Coughing up blood.</td>
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# Diabetes Zones

## Green Zone

**ALL CLEAR – This zone is your goal.**

- You have no symptoms of high or low blood sugar and you have:
  - A fasting blood sugar of 90-130 (before food or drink in the morning).
  - A blood sugar 1 to 2 hours after meals that is less than 180.
  - A1c (your average blood sugar over several months) under 7%.

## Yellow Zone

**CAUTION – These are warnings of LOW blood sugar**

- Shakiness, dizziness, extreme hunger, headache, pale skin, sweating
- Sudden mood or behavior changes (crying without reason)

**What to Do:**

1. Check your blood sugar (if possible) and write it down.
2. Eat 15-20 grams of sugar or starches. (Such as 1/2 cup of fruit juice, or regular soda; or 4 or 5 saltine crackers; or 4 teaspoons of sugar; or 1 tablespoon of honey or corn syrup.)
3. Wait 15-20 minutes and check your blood sugar again. If it is still below 60, eat 15-20 grams of sugar/starch again.

If your symptoms do not go away, call your Primary Care Provider NOW, and tell them: “I have diabetes and my blood sugar is too low. I need to talk to my Provider or the Medical Assistant.”

## Red Zone

**CAUTION – These are warnings of HIGH blood sugar**

- Extreme thirst, or
- Increase in urinating/passing water, or
- Nausea and vomiting, or
- Fruity smelling breath, or
- Belly (stomach) pain, or
- Deep/rapid breathing, or
- Blood sugar of 240 (or higher if you are used to higher levels).

**What to Do:**

Call your Primary Care Provider NOW and tell them: “I have diabetes and my blood sugar is too high. I need to talk to my Doctor or the Medical Assistant.”

**EMERGENCY – Call 911 or go to the Emergency Room if you have ANY of these symptoms:**

- Lack of coordination and confusion, or
- Double vision, or
- Fainting or passing out, or
- Convulsions or a seizure.