Body: Objective: To assess the effects of comprehensive self management and routine monitoring on quality of life, frequency and patients' management of exacerbations, and self efficacy in COPD patients in general practice. Design: 24 month, multicentre, investigator blinded, three arm, pragmatic, randomised controlled trial in the Netherlands. Interventions: A comprehensive self management programme, consisting of tailored sessions with ongoing support by a practice nurse; routine monitoring, consisting of structured practice nurse consultations; or usual care alone. Outcome measures: Primary outcome was the change at 24 months in CRQ total score. Secondary outcomes were CRQ domain scores, frequency and patients’ management of exacerbations (TEXAS), and self efficacy (CSES). Results: 165 patients were randomized equally. At 24 months, adjusted treatment differences in mean CRQ total score were not significant. Secondary outcomes did not differ, except for exacerbation management. Compared with usual care, more exacerbations in the self management group were managed with bronchodilators (OR 2.81, 95% CI 1.16 to 6.82) and with prednisolone, antibiotics, or both (3.98, 1.10 to 15.58). Conclusions: Comprehensive self management or routine monitoring did not show long term benefits in terms of quality of life or self efficacy over usual care alone in COPD patients in general practice. Patients in the self management group seemed to be more capable of appropriately managing exacerbations than did those in the usual care group. Trial registration: Clinical trials NCT00128765. Published as: BMJ 2012;345:e7642.