

EXERCISE AND CHRONIC LUNG CONDITIONS

Research has shown that the right kind of exercise is good for people with chronic lung conditions, even if it makes you feel breathless.

Many people with lung problems avoid exercise due to the uncomfortable feeling of breathlessness.



Unfortunately, once you start avoiding exercise, this can lead to a vicious cycle. Your muscles become weaker, your fitness is reduced and you may become more short of breath with less effort.

As a result, many people find that their ability to carry out normal daily activities has deteriorated.

Benefits of regular exercise

- Improve your fitness.
- Increase your muscle strength.
- Help clear sputum from your lungs.
- Reduce the feeling of breathlessness.
- Improve your confidence and independence.
- Help you cope better with everyday activities.
- Be a form of social interaction and development of support.

A simple exercise program

Your Physiotherapist can help you design a simple exercise program that suits your needs. Before you start any exercise program, however, it is important that you see your doctor, particularly if you have ever had:

- Chest pain, high blood pressure or heart disease.
- Diabetes requiring insulin injections.
- Blackouts or fainting.
- Pain in your calf or groin while walking.
- Severe arthritis or joint pain.

Home exercise guidelines

Where?

- You need to find a place to exercise. This might be a long hallway in your home, your driveway, around your neighbourhood or at a shopping centre. Some people might have an exercise bike that they can use.
- Try and vary your exercise so you don't get bored - do it with your partner, your children or grandchildren or your dog. Drive to the beach or a park and walk there.

How often?

- You should aim to exercise every day if you can, but at least 4-5 times per week.
- Always remember to warm up and cool down before and after you exercise.

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How much?

- The goal is to be able to perform 30-60 minutes of aerobic exercise such as walking, cycling or swimming. At first, this may seem impossible, so start slowly and build up gradually - you can break the exercise down into shorter blocks until your fitness improves.
- Start with _____ minutes, _____ times per day. Keep a diary of your progress and try to increase the amount you walk each week until you have reached 30-60 minutes.

How hard?

- It is normal to be a little bit breathless when you exercise, but not so short of breath that you can't talk. If you can't talk while you are exercising, you need to slow down or stop and rest. You should also stop exercising if you experience angina pain, chest tightness, palpitations (rapid heart beat), lightheadedness, nausea/vomiting, or excessive sweating.

The following scales can also be used to guide you whilst exercising:

How hard?

You should aim to score between 10-12 unless otherwise specified by your Physio.

Rating Of Perceived Exertion	
6	
7	Very, very light
8	
9	Very light
10	
11	Fairly light
12	
13	Somewhat hard
14	
15	Hard
16	
17	Very Hard
18	
19	Very, very hard
20	

How short of breath?

You should aim to score no more than 3 unless otherwise specified by your Physio.

Shortness Of Breath (BORG)	
0	Nothing at all
0.5	Very, very slight (just noticeable)
1	Very slight
2	Slight
3	Moderate
4	Somewhat severe
5	Severe
6	
7	Very severe
8	
9	Very, very severe (almost maximal)
10	Maximal

When not to exercise:

It is important NOT to exercise in the following situations:

- Straight after eating a heavy meal (wait for at least 1 hour).
- If you are feeling unwell or have a chest infection.
- During extremes of temperature (if it is very hot or very cold).