

STAYING SAFE CONTINUED

If you use oxygen select an exercise that does not involve moving around eg. treadmill walking or stationary cycling.

If you get any of the following problems stop and ask for medical advice from your GP or by contacting NHS Direct on **0845 4647**:

- discomfort in your chest or upper body brought on by physical activity
- uncomfortable or severe breathlessness during your activity
- dizziness or nausea on exertion
- fainting during or just after exercise
- palpitations (a very fast or irregular heart beat) during activity.
- Your GP or respiratory clinician may be able to advise you on local schemes for people with COPD.

Notes/Local information

WHAT NEXT?

- If you have another medical condition like arthritis, high blood pressure or diabetes, then a good source of information is the appropriate medical charity for your condition. Most of these charities offer specific exercise and lifestyle advice. Examples include the British Heart Foundation, Diabetes UK, Arthritis Research Campaign or Cancer Research UK.
- Local YMCA clubs or public gyms offer a range of exercise opportunities, some of which may focus on specific age groups or medical conditions.

MORE INFORMATION

- British Lung Foundation Helpline
08458 505020
www.britishlungfoundation.org

Supported by



WHO IS SPORTEX/HEALTHEX?

We specialise in producing information and resources for medical, health and exercise professionals around the subject of exercise, health and musculoskeletal injury. This includes a range of subscription-based publications and accompanying advice handouts for patients and clients. All our material is produced by leading medical professionals and reviewed by peers working in relevant industries. For more information visit www.sportex.net

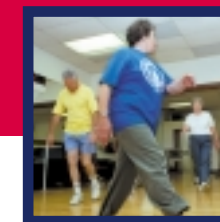
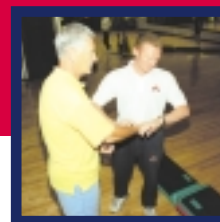


The information contained in this article is intended as general guidance and information only and should not be relied upon as a basis for planning individual medical care or as a substitute for specialist medical advice in each individual case. To the extent permissible by law, the publisher, editors and contributors accept no liability for any loss, injury or damage howsoever incurred (including negligence) as a consequence, whether directly or indirectly, of the use by any person of the contents of this article.

Produced by

healthEX

EXERCISE AND COPD



WHAT IS COPD?

COPD is a group of chronic lung conditions (usually chronic bronchitis and emphysema) which cause your lungs to become slowly blocked. This means it gets harder for you to get rid of all the air in your lungs when you breathe out. Breathing becomes more difficult and the breathlessness and anxiety it causes often leads to a less active lifestyle.

THE CAUSES

The major cause is cigarette smoking. The more you have smoked, the greater the risk of COPD. The most significant way to stop the decline of your lungs is to stop smoking!

HOW CAN EXERCISE HELP?

Breathlessness is distressing and anxiety about making this breathlessness worse with exercise may put you off being active. Breathlessness is also frightening for those around you and as a result your friends and

family may try to encourage you to do less. However the less active you become the more the function of your heart, lungs and muscles declines and the harder everyday activities will become. It is common for those suffering from COPD to enter a vicious cycle of breathlessness, fear of activity and therefore inactivity which then leads to a loss of physical conditioning, increasing breathlessness and tired muscles. Eventually you will need to rely more on help from friends, family or carers, with everyday activities.

If you take regular exercise it can:

- Help reverse the effects of deconditioning brought on by your lack of activity
- Delay the starting point of breathlessness
- Reduce the anxiety associated with breathlessness.
- Reduce hospital admissions saving everyone costs!

Be active - be safe - have fun!

EXERCISE AND COPD

HOW DOES PHYSICAL ACTIVITY HELP IF YOU HAVE COPD?

Why should someone who is so short of breath get fitter by exercising which in itself causes breathlessness? There is a lot of research proving the beneficial effects of exercise. Physical activity:

- along with good nutrition helps you to maintain a healthy weight and use up stored fat
- helps increase strength
- helps you to do more, without getting

breathless and it can increase your resistance to breathlessness

- helps you feel less tired and helps you to sleep better
- helps reduce high blood cholesterol levels, high blood pressure, and the risk of having a heart attack or stroke or suffering from diabetes
- reduces the risk of bowel cancer, osteoporosis and the risk of falling
- improves your quality of life because you have better mobility and you can

- do your daily activities more easily
- helps reduce stress and improves your overall feeling of well-being.

supervised environment, preferably a pulmonary rehabilitation programme. This will give you confidence and help you to understand how hard you should be exercising and what is a safe level.

Pulmonary rehabilitation is becoming more widely available and along with exercise training includes education on the disease, use of medication, nutrition, breathing strategies, sputum clearance and lifestyle management.

STAYING SAFE

Before starting to exercise it is important to see your GP. You may have other medical conditions that need to be considered such as high blood pressure.

Ideally your introduction to an exercise programme should take place in a

WHAT TYPE OF ACTIVITY IS BEST?

While stamina-based activity is particularly important if you have COPD, strength and flexibility-based activity is also useful to get the best health gains.

Stamina-type activities: Walking, swimming, cycling, dancing, tennis and housework, you could use a static bike or treadmill if you require oxygen while you exercise

Strength-type activities: Walking uphill, carrying shopping, climbing stairs, gardening (digging or mowing) and housework

Flexibility-type activities: Dancing, yoga, Pilates, T'ai Chi and gardening

Tips on increasing your activity level

- Walking is an ideal activity as it's free and easy to do anywhere. Perhaps take a dog for a walk to make it more interesting or use a pedometer to count your steps (see back page).
- Look for opportunities to be active during your whole day. For example park at the far end of the car park, or walk one stop further to catch the bus.
- Try using the stairs instead of the escalator. If you do use the escalator, start by walking part of the way and gradually progress to walking up the whole way.
- Choose activities that you enjoy doing. Involve your friends and family to make your activities fun, sociable and enjoyable.

HOW MUCH AND HOW OFTEN?

Frequency The aim for the general population is to build up to 30 minutes of moderate intensity activity on 5 or more days of the week but if you have COPD this may be unrealistic. Setting a very low level that is probably too easy is much more helpful than trying too hard at first. Allow time to get used to the new exercise, then plan a small step up: a 10% increase is usually enough.

Intensity Moderate intensity means breathing harder and getting warmer than normal. It does not need to be hard. You should be able to talk and be active at the same time and still feel comfortable.

Advice Whatever your chosen activity, it should be performed at a gentle intensity which gradually increases. This gets the blood flowing to your muscles and allows your heart rate to increase gradually. When you are nearing the end of your activity, decrease the level of activity to allow your heart rate to slow down gradually.

Remember Set yourself realistic goals and don't worry if you miss one day. Just make sure that the next day you pick up where you left off.