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Pulmonary Rehabilitation Patient Information Leaflet

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**Email: fife.EqualityandHumanRights@nhs.scot or
Phone: 01592 729130.**

For people with a hearing or verbal impairment you can also contact the team via the NHS Fife SMS text service number on 07805 800005.

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Contents:

Breathing Control	Page 1-2
Breathing Positions	Page 3-4
Benefits of Exercise	Page 5-8
Pacing	Page 9-10
Chest Clearance	Page 11-16
Recognising the warning signs	Page 17-19
What Next ?	Page 20



Other warning signs

Do not ignore these signs:

- * Swollen ankles. Either new or worse than your normal
- * Blood in your sputum
- * A switch in sleeping habit. Awake all night and asleep all day

Remember early treatment can help. It can prevent further problems or a hospital stay.

Learn what is “normal” for you. This way you will know when you have different symptoms. You can then seek advice from your Practice Nurse or GP.

Blow as you go’ technique

It is common for people to hold their breath and tense up during strenuous tasks such as lifting shopping or standing up from a low chair. This makes the body use more oxygen because so many muscles are working at once.

Help your muscles to stay relaxed by blowing out during strenuous activities such as lifting heavy objects or standing up. This should make you less breathless.

- * A change in sputum colour. This could be yellow, green or brown
- * Increased breathlessness
- * Having a new fever or temperature
- * Increased coughing
- * Cold or flu like symptoms

Do not ignore warning signs.

If you have a written COPD Plan, follow the instructions on this. You may have antibiotics at home. You should follow your plan and take these as instructed. If you do not keep antibiotics at home contact your GP surgery.

If you have or think you have a chest infection and develop:

- * **Slurred speech**
- * **Confusion**
- * **Irritability**

that is more than normal and also if you live alone and do feel you cannot manage on your own, seek medical help urgently.

2. Breathing Positions

If you are breathless you might like to try one of these positions to help get your breathing back under control.

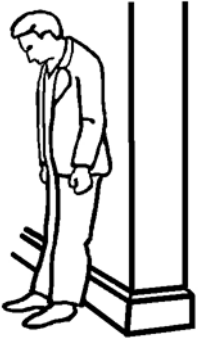
When trying to control your breathing do not take extra deep breaths. Concentrate on the sighing out part of the breath. Gradually slow down your breathing rate.

Try them all until you find the one that works best for you. This will depend on where you are and what you are doing.

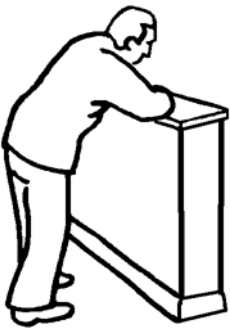
1. Sit in a chair and lean forward with both arms resting on your thighs. Relax your wrists.



2. Stand with your back against a wall. Relax your shoulders, resting your arms by your sides. Your feet should be about 12 inches/30cm from the wall and slightly apart.



3. While standing, lean forward with your arms resting on a ledge. A windowsill or kitchen worktop is good.



Diagrams reproduced with permission of Chest Heart and Stroke, Scotland.

6. Warning Signs of Infection

If you have lung disease you are more likely to suffer from chest infections. You should try to avoid infections. They can cause damage to your lungs. If you do get an infection, early treatment is best.

Avoiding Chest Infections

- * Do not allow family and friends to visit if they are unwell
- * Avoid crowded rooms
- * Get your annual flu jab
- * Get the pneumococcal jab. It helps prevent pneumonia
- * Get your COVID booster jab when offered
- * Do not smoke or allow others to smoke in your home
- * Keep active when you are well
- * Eat a well balanced diet

Signs of a Chest Infection

- * An unusual, for you, increase in your sputum
- * An unusual, for you, decrease in sputum
- * A change in the thickness of your sputum

If you are unwell with a chest infection you may become breathless and you may have more phlegm in your lungs. Here are some things you should do in addition to calling your GP:

1. Perform the breathing exercise whenever you have phlegm in your lungs. This may be as often as every hour when you are awake.
2. Drink even more water than usual to keep the phlegm moist.
3. Do not stay in bed all day. Activity and movement help you to cough up phlegm. Sitting up in a chair makes it easier to breathe and cough effectively.

It is important to clear phlegm from your chest to allow more air to get into your lungs. This will also help to reduce the amount of chest infections you get.

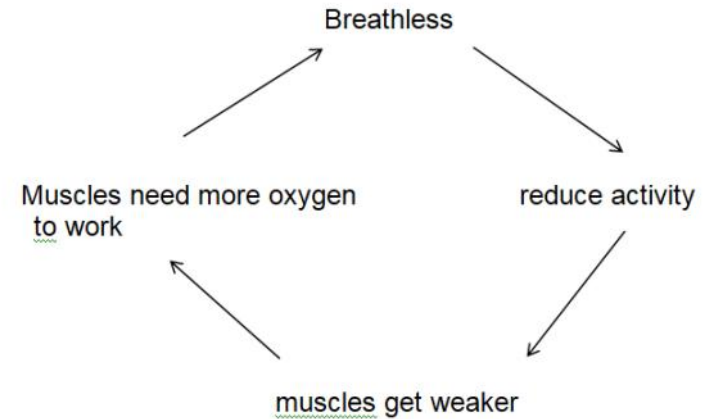
A good session of chest clearance in the morning should make you feel better during the day.

If you tend to wake during the night to cough up phlegm, you need to spend some time clearing your chest in the evening.

Clearing your chest is a vital part of keeping well when you have lung disease. Make sure you feel confident about doing this independently or ask for guidance from your physiotherapist.

3. The Benefits of Exercise

The Vicious Cycle of inactivity



As well as the muscles getting weaker, inactivity makes us:

- * Lose flexibility and suppleness
- * Bones become thinner and weaker

How to break the vicious cycle:

- * By not being afraid of breathlessness on exertion

- * By building up weak muscles and reducing the amount of oxygen we need to do any task

So, if your muscles are stronger, you may do the same task but be less breathless doing it. Or you may do more before becoming as breathless.

EXERCISE:

- * Increases your fitness and breaks the vicious cycle of inactivity
- * Improves bone density and helps prevent osteoporosis
- * Lessens the fear of breathlessness
- * Keeps the heart strong and efficient
- * Improves the circulation
- * Keeps the chest mobile
- * Increases the strength of the respiratory muscles
- * Improves the body's ability to fight infection
- * Improves feelings of general well-being and quality of life
- * Helps alleviate feelings of anxiety/depression

Exercise is good for you but it is important to know when to stop.

STOP exercising when your breathlessness feels “moderate” – 3 on the Breathlessness scale.

- * Carry out breathing control until you have recovered. Do not rest for too long.
- * While exercising you should be able to speak short phrases. If you can carry on a whole conversation you can work a bit harder. If you can only gasp out one word, you need to slow down.

STOP if you feel chest pain, dizziness or faint

Other ways to help clear phlegm

Exercise can be very effective at clearing phlegm from your lungs as it makes you breathe deeply. Try any of the following:

1. Going for a walk
2. Climbing stairs
3. Marching on the spot
4. Punching the air with your arms 10 times
5. Anything else that gets you out of breath

Fluids and steam

If you are dehydrated the phlegm in your lungs becomes sticky and can be difficult to cough up. You should drink around 6-8 glasses of water a day. If you dislike drinking water try adding diluting juice to flavour the water.

Avoid repeated coughing

Repeated coughing can be tiring and can irritate the airways. Try to avoid coughing fits by sipping cold water or swallowing and then performing the breathing exercise to clear the phlegm.

What to do if you are unwell

If you become breathless or your phlegm gets stickier or changes colour contact your GP straight away.

The earlier an infection is caught, the easier it is to treat.

- * Breathe all the way out again, pushing the air out of your chest completely
- * Continue breathing in and out like this until you hear or feel the phlegm moving up into your upper chest or you feel the urge to cough
- * When you feel this, take a slow, deep breath in
- * Hold for 3 seconds
- * Breathe out harder pushing as much air out as possible
- * Finally, when the phlegm reaches the larger airways it can be cleared by coughing
- * To cough properly, take a slow deep breath in, keep your chin in a little and cough very hard

Relax for a minute or two before starting again. Continue until your chest is completely clear and you cannot hear the phlegm gurgling.

NEVER attempt to exercise through a pain barrier

Remember breathlessness is a normal response to exertion. If you have a lung condition this will occur more quickly. It is simply the lungs working harder to get more oxygen into the body.

When should I exercise?

Government guidelines state that exercise 5 times per week is needed to maintain fitness. Choose a time of day when your breathing is easier. Stop the exercises if you are unwell – when you restart, do so gradually.

How do I exercise?

- * Wear loose fitting clothes
- * Exhale (breathe out) with the hard part of an exercise and when you bend down

What exercise?

For people with lung disease walking is one of the best forms of exercise. It is a useful starting point. Build up how far you walk gradually.

- * Walk on the flat at a steady pace until you are a bit breathless. Stop and practise breathing control.
- * Allow your arms to hang loosely from your sides, shoulders relaxed.

- * Try to walk for a set distance, as you are able. Gradually increase either the time or distance that you walk.
- * You may be able to increase your speed by walking the same distance in a shorter time.
- * Try to walk each day, even if it is just round the house.

Depending on your level of fitness, stairs can be used. Use the same principles of building up. If you prefer, walking up a slight slope is another option.

Walking will help to improve your fitness. Other exercise will help to improve your body by strengthening muscles and mobilising joints.

As muscles strengthen they require less oxygen during exertion.

REMEMBER to co-ordinate your breathing – exhale with the effort/hard part of an exercise.

STOP when you feel moderately breathless and practise breathing control.

As you become fitter you may wish to consider other forms of exercise for example swimming or dancing – but the important thing is to ENJOY the activity.

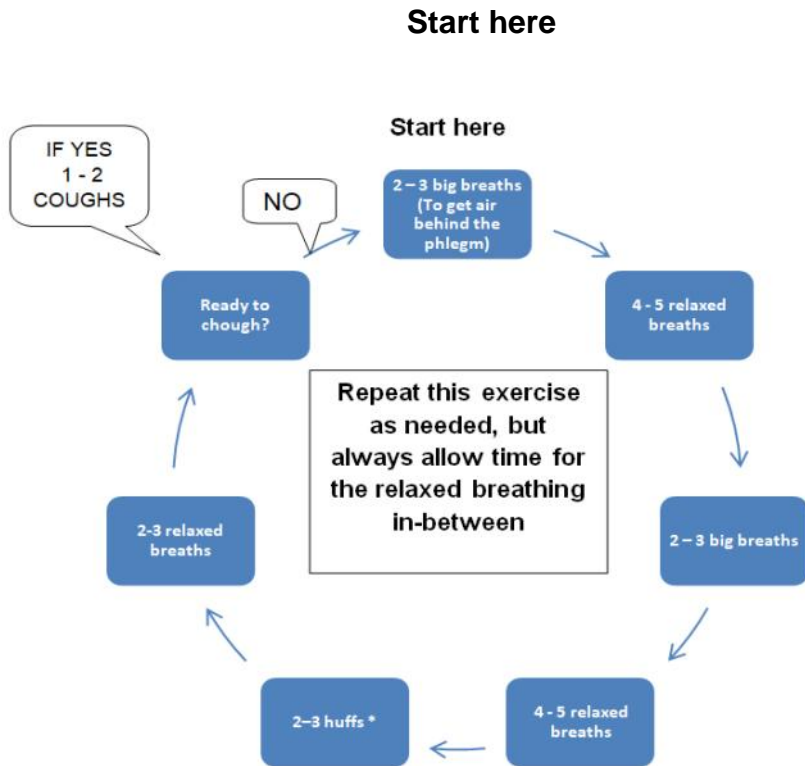
b. Autogenic Drainage

This is a technique that involves breathing as far out as possible. This loosens the phlegm from the small airways at the edges of your lungs. The phlegm can then be moved to the larger, more central airways. This makes it easier to “cough up”.

Choose a comfortable position, but make sure you are not too slouched. Sitting or lying down with a couple of pillows behind your head are both good positions.

- * Gently breathe in (through your nose if you can)
- * Hold your breath for 3 seconds
- * Push your breath out steadily through your mouth for as long as you can manage. Use your stomach muscles to help at the end. You should hear the phlegm gurgle if you are doing it correctly. If you wheeze, you are being too forceful. This closes off the airways so that the phlegm cannot get through. If this happens, have a short break until your wheeze settles. Then using less force, try again
- * The further you breathe out, the more phlegm will move from the edges of your lungs. It is just like squeezing a bath sponge to get the last bit of water out
- * Breathe in again slowly and gently but not too deeply (to prevent the phlegm going back down)
- * Hold for 3 seconds again

a. Active Cycle Breathing Technique



*HUFFS – This is the type of breath you would use to steam up glass before polishing it. Perform with an open and relaxed mouth and throat. Huffs move phlegm up through the lungs.

Perform this exercise first thing in the morning and whenever you have phlegm in your lungs. If you have an infection and more phlegm you should increase how often you do the exercise.

4. Pacing

There are some simple steps you can take to help conserve the energy that you have.

These are:

- * **NEVER RUSH-** take your time, the task will still get done but you will be less tired
- * **Balance a period of rest with a period of activity-** make sure you have short times in the day to stop and rest
- * **Break activities down into small manageable tasks. Plan what you have to do**
- * **Get to know when you have the most energy and plan your activities around this. Do not squeeze too much into one day**
- * **Try planning your schedule for the whole week and for each day of the week. Consider the weather forecast too for humidity, pollen, etc**
- * **Don't overdo it on a good day**
- * **Try to slide things instead of lifting them**
- * **Use a trolley instead of carrying things. This can be for shopping or in the house between rooms**

- * Use correct lifting techniques. Bend at the knees and breathe correctly
- * Remember to breathe out (exhale) during the hard part of the activity
- * Sit down to do your activities wherever possible
- * Do not stretch to reach things – use a stool if safe
- * Organise the area in which you are working to ensure everything is within easy reach
- * Try using a shower stool or bath board to help you rest whilst washing
- * Try using a towelling dressing gown instead of drying yourself with a towel
- * Sit to undress, shower and dry your body
- * Use a long handled sponge
- * Try to keep steam to a minimum
- * Organise clothes the evening before and have them within easy reach
- * Sit down to dress and dress the lower half of the body first
- * When putting on socks and shoes try crossing your leg at the knee or putting your foot on a stool

5. Chest Clearance

It is important that phlegm does not stay in your lungs as it can damage the lining of the lungs and it may cause a chest infection.

Coughing only shifts phlegm from your upper airways. If you have phlegm deep in your lungs it can be very difficult to clear it with coughing.

The following advice will help you to clear phlegm from your lungs.

There are 2 chest clearance techniques; active cycle of breathing and autogenic drainage.