**PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND COPD**

Regular exercise is part of a healthy lifestyle, even if you have chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). You might feel like it is not safe, or even possible to exercise, but the right amount and type of exercise has many benefits. Be sure to ask your doctor before you start or make changes to your exercise routine.

Moderate exercise can improve:

* The body's use of oxygen
* Energy levels
* [Anxiety, stress and depression](https://www.lung.org/lung-health-diseases/lung-disease-lookup/copd/living-with-copd/coping-with-emotions)
* Sleep
* Self-esteem
* Cardiovascular fitness
* Muscle strength
* [Shortness of breath](https://www.lung.org/lung-health-diseases/lung-disease-lookup/shortness-of-breath)

It might seem odd that exercising when you are short of breath actually improves it—but it works! Exercises help your blood circulate and helps your heart send oxygen to your body. It also strengthens your respiratory muscles. This can make it easier to breath.

Before you start exercising, talk to your doctor about what types and amounts of exercise are right for you.

**What Type of Exercises Are Generally Good for People with COPD?**

[**Pulmonary Rehabilitation**](https://www.lung.org/lung-health-diseases/lung-procedures-and-tests/pulmonary-rehab) can be a great way to stay active and learn how to exercise with COPD. This program consists of education and exercise classes that teach you about your lungs and your disease, and how to exercise and be more active with less shortness of breath. The classes take place in a group setting, giving you the chance to meet others with your condition while both giving and receiving support.

**Stretching** relaxes you and improves your flexibility. It's also a good way to warm up before and cool down after exercising. Practice holding a gentle stretch for 10 to 30 seconds, slowly breathing in and out. Repeat this a few times.

**Aerobic** exercise is good for your heart and lungs and allows you to use oxygen more efficiently. Walking, biking and swimming are great examples of aerobic exercise. Try and do this type of exercise for about a half an hour a few times a week.

**Resistance** training makes all your muscles stronger, including the ones that help you breathe. It usually involves weights or resistance bands, but you don't need to go to a gym to do resistance training. Ask your doctor or respiratory therapist to show you some exercises you can do at home. To get stronger, do these exercises three to four times a week.

**It is generally safe for people with COPD to exercise but you should not exercise if:**

* *You have a fever or infection*
* *Feel nauseated*
* *Have chest pain*
* *Are out of oxygen*

Contact your doctor right away if you are experiencing any of these symptoms.

**Should I Use My Oxygen When I Exercise?**

If you use supplemental oxygen, you should exercise with it. Your doctor may adjust your flow rate for physical activity, which will be different than your flow rate when you are resting. Work with your doctor to adjust your oxygen for physical activity.

Here are some other tips for breathing during exercise:

* Remember to inhale (breathe in) before starting the exercise and exhale (breathe out) through the most difficult part of the exercise.
* Take slow breaths and pace yourself.
* Purse your lips while breathing out.

**Need Help Getting Started?**

If you want guidance on starting an exercise routine you can contact the specialists listed below. Make sure the specialist is certified by an exercise-related professional organization, such as the American College of Sports Medicine.

* Physical therapist
* Exercise physiologist
* Personal trainer

**Caregivers Tip:**

Exercising together is a great way to support someone with COPD. Buy resistance bands, free weights and other home exercise equipment, so both of you can do simple exercises while watching TV and listening to music. You can also go on walks. Many people with COPD like walking in malls because they are flat, air-conditioned and there are many places to rest.

**Ways to Stay Active**

* Try to get up and out each day, even just to walk to another room, take a shower or get the mail. Every little bit helps.
* Light stretching is a great way to stay mobile and avoid over exertion.
* Participate in activities you enjoyed before you were diagnosed. You may need to modify them, but they can still be enjoyed.
* Set achievable goals for yourself such as taking a short walk every day.
* Check out exercise programs on your television, online or cellphone apps.
* Participate in a [pulmonary rehabilitation](https://www.lung.org/lung-health-diseases/lung-procedures-and-tests/pulmonary-rehab) program.
* Do you have questions and concerns about managing exertion during sexual activity? [Here are some suggestions »](https://www.lung.org/lung-health-diseases/lung-disease-lookup/copd/living-with-copd/intimacy-during-treatment)

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