

Patient information

Continuing to exercise after pulmonary rehabilitation

Why do I need to continue to exercise?

Your six-week course of pulmonary rehabilitation was designed to introduce you to exercise to help manage your lung condition better.



During the six weeks you will have learnt how your body responds to exercise and how you can adapt exercise to suit your body's needs.



Now that you have completed your pulmonary rehabilitation course, it is vital that you continue with some regular exercise so that the benefits and improvements you have made can be maintained, or even improved further.

There are many reasons why continuing with exercise is important:

- Helps to keep your chest clear
- Helps reduce frequency of chest infections
- Quicker recovery from chest infections
- Maintains fitness
- Maintains wellbeing

How you choose to continue with your exercise is up to you. You may prefer to exercise alone, with a friend or in a group session. You may choose to exercise at home, your local leisure centre or at a follow-on exercise group.

Remember:

- **Cardiovascular exercises:** help get your heart and lungs working and improve your fitness levels and breathlessness.
- **Strengthening exercises:** help to strengthen your muscles.

- **Balance and co-ordination exercises:** help to reduce your risk of falls.

Continuing your exercises at home

Many people choose this option to continue their exercise as it is the most convenient and can fit around their other daily activities and appointments.

If you decide to continue with the exercises you did in your pulmonary rehabilitation classes, try to complete a full set of these exercises at least twice per week. If you find this difficult to fit around your other commitments, then spread the exercises over four days instead of two.

Start by continuing at the level you finished at in the classes and then re-assess your abilities every two weeks.

Make sure that you assess each exercise individually, as some may be able to be increased, but others not.

As a rough guide:

- **BORG 0 – 2** These exercises can be increased by 30 seconds
- **BORG 3 – 4** Maintain these exercises at same level
- **BORG 5+** These exercises may need to be reduced by 30 seconds

Once you have adjusted your exercises, you should continue at your new level for at least two weeks before re-evaluating.

You should always try to maintain your exercises in the BORG 3 - 4 range.

At some point you will find that your BORG scores remain at the same level and so you cannot increase your exercises any further. It is therefore fine for you to continue at this level indefinitely.

Please stay safe when exercising

If you experience any of the following symptoms whilst you are exercising, then you must stop immediately and seek medical advice:

- Chest pain or tightness not relieved by GTN spray (if you have one)
- Feeling dizzy, clammy or cold
- Feeling very wheezy
- Weakness in an arm or leg which feels more than just being tired

Record of exercise table

Use the table below to record the date of your exercise and how many minutes of each exercise you completed. This will help you to keep track of how you are progressing with your exercises. Remember to take a short rest between exercises if needed (eg one minute).

Activity		Final class level	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date
Shuttle walk	Time								
	BORG								
Side taps	Time								
	BORG								
Marching	Time								
	BORG								
Step-ups	Time								
	BORG								
Upright row	Time								
	BORG								
Punches	Time								
	BORG								
Bicep curls	Time								
	BORG								
Chest press	Time								
	BORG								
Ball throw	Time								
	BORG								
Knee extensions	Time								
	BORG								
Heel raise	Time								
	BORG								
Sit to stand	Time								
	BORG								
Squats	Time								
	BORG								

BORG Breathlessness Scale

You should aim to maintain your breathing in the BORG 3 - 4 zones whilst exercising.

Level	Description
0	Nothing at all (no breathlessness at all)
0.5	Just noticeable (slightly breathless, but I can do this all day)
1	Very slight (still more than comfortable, but breathing a little harder now)
2	Slight (feeling good, getting a little warm, but I can hold a conversation)
3	Moderate (beginning to feel you're working)
4	Somewhat difficult (I'm just above comfortable. A bit puffed/sweaty, but still able to hold a conversation)
5	Difficult (I can still talk, but I am definitely breathless and definitely hot and sweaty)
6	Moderately severe (I can still talk, but I don't really want to. I am feeling very pushed)
7	Severe (very breathless and struggling to keep going)
8	Very severe (I can grunt more than talk. I can't keep up this pace for long)
9	Very, very severe (Struggling to get my breath. Unable to talk. Need to stop soon!)
10	Maximal effort (I can't go any further! Ready to stop/pass out!)

How do I exercise if I have a flare-up or chest infection?

Flare-ups of your breathlessness, or a chest infection, can make you feel unwell, leaving you with reduced energy levels and not feeling like exercising. However, it is still important that you continue to keep active, but at a lower level, until this period has passed.

So, if you are feeling very unwell, are very breathless and your oxygen levels are low, it is important that you rest more to help conserve your energy to fight your infection. At times like these you may find the following helpful:

- Try and get up every hour or so to take a few steps, to get a drink or have a snack
- If you feel you want to exercise, then carry a few knee extensions, heel raises or gentle arm exercises (no weights) in sitting once or twice per day

If, however, you still feel fairly well with your chest infection or breathlessness then try the following:

- Reduce the duration/time of each of your exercises (maybe back to the level at the beginning of your six week course)
- Reduce the heaviness of the weights for your arm exercises, or don't use weights at all
- Carry out the exercises in sitting or propped standing
- Do half of the exercises one day and the rest the next day

Once you are feeling better, then start to increase your exercise duration/time gradually with the aim of getting back to where you were prior to your infection within six weeks.

Useful contacts

For Pulmonary Rehabilitation enquiries: **Suffolk Community Healthcare Care Co-ordination Centre (CCC)**; Tel: 0300 123 2425

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the website for AccessAble (formerly DisabledGo)

<https://www.accessable.co.uk>



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