

COPD

Low physical activity levels are the strongest predictor of early death in people with COPD: Stronger than how much they've smoked or how many inhalers they need. ([Waschki 2011](#))

Physical inactivity and COPD create a vicious cycle of breathlessness and reduced functional ability ([BLF](#))



Physical activity and pulmonary rehabilitation can break this cycle ([Corhay 2014](#)).

Prevention

There is no evidence that physical activity *prevents* the onset of COPD. Smoking and other things that damage the lungs cause the condition.

Treatment

Regular physical activity and pulmonary rehabilitation improve the following ([Cochrane 2015](#); [Gloeckl 2013](#)):

- oxygen usage by the body
- the efficiency of your lungs
- your heart function
- your independence and ability to manage your condition yourself
- the length and quality of your life

Whilst they reduce ([Cochrane 2011](#); [Watz 2008](#); [Moy et al 2009](#)):

- tiredness and shortness of breath
- the speed at which your lungs get worse
- anxiety levels and fear
- number of hospital visits and days spent in hospital

Pulmonary rehabilitation is an exercise programme available for COPD treatment. If you've had an exacerbation of your COPD recently, find you walk slower than most people on the level or have to stop after a mile or 15 minutes walking due to breathlessness, you may qualify for a programme – ask your GP ([NICE](#))

Comparisons

Advice

If you get breathless during exercise, aim to slow down rather than stop.

If you are getting severe breathless that does not ease when you stop, take a rest, use your reliever inhaler and wait until you feel better before starting again ([ACSM](#); [Beauchamp 2010](#))

Aerobic and strength exercises both help your breathing.

Remember to do strength exercises of the arms too as this also helps with your breathing.

Avoid exercise whilst you have an exacerbation of your COPD.

Discuss exercise with your doctor if your resting oxygen saturations are less than 90% or you have pulmonary hypertension.

Further resources for Healthcare Professionals

[Motivate to Move – Respiratory disease](#)

[FYSS - COPD](#)