

# Self Care



## Living Well with COPD

in Inverclyde

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Content to be reviewed March 2017

## **What is Self Care**

### **...and what does it mean for me?**

Looking after yourself in a healthy way, whether it's: brushing your teeth; taking medicine when you have a cold; or doing some exercise; is really important to help to keep yourself as well as possible.

If you have a long-term condition (this is what we mean when we talk about your Self-Care), there are extra things you may need to think about, such as: making changes to your diet; different types of exercise; or different types of medication you may need to take.

It is important for you to stay active and do things that are important to you, such as: gardening; seeing friends and family; going on holiday; or continuing to work, where possible. Self care involves looking at what you can do and what you want to do, rather than what you can't do.

Living a healthy lifestyle is an important part of self care for everyone. You can take care of your own health and wellbeing, with support from the people involved in your COPD care.

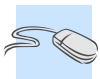
When you talk to your doctor or nurse about your condition, you may want to discuss some of the things you need to do to stay well. Some of these will be things that you do yourself, such as: healthy eating; exercising; or taking your medication at the right time.

### **NHS Choices**

There's lots of useful information about keeping well and healthy living on the **NHS Choices** website.

If you're living with a long-term condition, you can look this up in the "**Health A-Z**" section. Each condition has a "**Living with**" section which has advice on self care and taking control of your health.

Also look out for the "**Live Well**" section of the website for more general Information.



[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

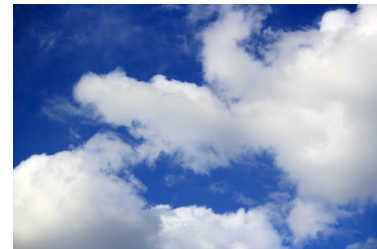
# What is COPD?

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) is a term for a collection of lung diseases including chronic bronchitis and emphysema.

If you have COPD, you will have difficulty breathing, primarily due to the narrowing of your airways - this is called airways obstruction.

Typical symptoms of COPD include:

- increasing breathlessness when active
- a persistent cough with phlegm and mucus
- frequent chest infections and flare ups



## What causes COPD?

### Smoking

Smoking is the main cause of COPD. At least four out of five people who develop COPD smoke, or used to smoke. The lining of the airways becomes inflamed and permanently damaged by smoking. This damage cannot be reversed but **stopping smoking is key in preventing the condition getting worse.**

Research has shown you are up to four times more likely to quit smoking if you use the support of your local Stop Smoking Service in addition to the use of products such as patches or gum. They can offer support, advice and details of local support groups. Contact your local service on:



**Smokefree Services (Inverclyde)**

**01475 501226**

### Second Hand Smoke

Exposure to other people's smoke increases the risk of COPD.

### Other factors

Some cases of COPD are caused by having worked in a damaging work environment, living in damp conditions, fumes, dust, air pollution and genetic disorders, but these are less common.

# Living with COPD

COPD can affect many aspects of your life. However, there are some simple tips and techniques to help reduce its impact:

## **Self Care**

Self care involves taking responsibility for your own health and wellbeing with support from people involved in your care.

People living with long-term conditions can benefit enormously if they receive support and self care. They can live longer, experience less pain, less anxiety, less depression and fatigue, have a better quality of life and be more active and independent.

## **Take your medication**

It's important to take your medication as prescribed, even if you start to feel better. Regular medication can help prevent flare-ups. If you have questions or concerns about the medication you're taking or side effects, talk to your healthcare team.

It may also be useful to read the information leaflet that comes with the medication about possible interactions with other drugs or supplements. Check with your healthcare team if you plan to take any over-the-counter remedies, such as painkillers, or any nutritional supplements, as these can sometimes interfere with your prescribed medication.

## **Regular reviews**

Because COPD is a long-term condition, you'll be given annual reviews by your GP/Practice Nurse. A good relationship with the healthcare team allows you to easily discuss your symptoms and concerns. The more the team gets to know you, the more they can support you. Many people feel reassured when a family member or friend is involved in discussions about their care and your team will welcome this.

## **Keeping well**

Everyone with a long-term condition such as COPD, is encouraged to get a yearly flu jab each autumn to protect against flu. They are also recommended to get an anti-pneumococcal vaccination, a one-off injection that protects against serious infection caused by pneumococcal bacteria. Recognising warning signs of a chest infection and acting promptly is

important - watch for changes to normal degree of breathlessness/change in colour and consistency of phlegm.

## **Long-term oxygen therapy**

If the oxygen level in your blood is low, you may be advised to have oxygen at home through nasal tubes (also called a nasal cannula) or through a mask.

People who require oxygen therapy need to be reviewed by a Respiratory Consultant and have an oxygen assessment at the hospital.

Oxygen is not a treatment for breathlessness, but it has long-term benefits for some patients with continually low oxygen levels in the blood.

You may be referred for a more detailed assessment to see whether you might benefit from long-term oxygen therapy. The aim of long-term oxygen therapy is to extend your life.

Oxygen is normally only described to non-smokers. **But do not smoke, or allow anyone else to smoke when you are using oxygen.** The increased level of oxygen produced is highly flammable, and a lit cigarette could trigger a fire or explosion.

## **Check the weather**

Check the weather forecast as the weather can have an adverse effect on your COPD symptoms. Cold spells lasting at least a week and periods of hot weather and humidity can cause breathing problems. Try and avoid exposure to cold air to minimise your symptoms.



# Health and wellbeing

## **Exercise**

People with COPD who exercise or keep active regularly have improved breathing, less severe symptoms and a better quality of life.

For most people with COPD who are affected by their breathlessness, a structured programme of pulmonary rehabilitation provided by experienced healthcare professionals is best. You can be referred to this programme by your GP, Practice Nurse or Respiratory Nurse Specialist.

**Getting breathless is unpleasant but it isn't harmful.** You should try to exercise as much as you can - however little that may be - twice a day. You can even do some arm and upper body movements in your chair.

Research shows that pulmonary rehabilitation improves your exercise tolerance, breathlessness and health-related quality of life. It results in you seeing doctors less often and spending less time in hospital.

## **Maintain a healthy weight**

Carrying extra weight can make breathlessness worse. Therefore, it is a good idea to lose weight if you are overweight. This may be difficult because the breathlessness caused by COPD can make it hard to exercise.

However, some people with COPD find that they lose weight. If you are underweight eating food high in protein and taking in enough calories is important to maintain a healthy weight.

Research has shown that people with COPD who are underweight will have fewer COPD symptoms if they increase their weight to a healthy weight for their height.

## **Talk to others**

If you have questions, your doctor or nurse may be able to reassure you. You may find it helpful to talk to a trained counsellor or psychologist, or someone on a specialist helpline. Your doctor's surgery will have information on these. Some people find it helpful to talk to other people who have COPD, either at a local support group or an internet chat room.

## **A local support group meets at:**



Your Voice,  
12 Clyde Square,  
Greenock

on the 1st Tuesday of the month, from 1pm to 3pm



# Ways to get more active

**Start small and build up** - check with your doctor or healthcare team.

**Be realistic about your goals** - set yourself realistic goals that are achievable for you and build on this.



**Make exercise part of your day** - Plan a time to do some physical activity that fits in with the rest of your day. Try keeping an activity diary to help monitor your progress and success. If you miss a day just start again the next day.

**Keep moving and make it fun!** - Remember, everyday activities count, so look out for opportunities to be active during the day. For example, use the stairs instead of the lift, or walk to the local shop rather than taking the car. Choose activities that you enjoy to help you achieve your goals and keep you motivated. Vary your activity and try to involve family and friends.

**Reward yourself** - recognise when you achieve your goals. Think of things that you could reward yourself with, like a copy of your favourite magazine.

Try to increase your activity little by little - so you can increase your strength and ability.

**Live Active** is a service for people who are inactive and would benefit from increasing their physical activity or for people who would like to lose some weight.



**01475 715786**

**Vitality** is a programme of basic exercise classes that supports participants to exercise at a level suitable to their abilities. The classes are suitable for people with different physical abilities and medical conditions.

You can be referred to Live Active & Vitality by your GP, Practice Nurse or Physiotherapist.

### **Walking groups in Inverclyde:**

	Time & Meeting Place
Port Glasgow	<b>Mondays</b> , 11.00 am Port Glasgow Swimming Pool  <b>Wednesdays</b> , 12.00 noon Coronation Park bus stop
Greenock	<b>Mondays</b> , 2.00 pm Your Voice, 12 Clyde Square  <b>Thursdays</b> , 10.00 am Your Voice, 12 Clyde Square
Gourock	<b>Thursdays</b> , 2.00 pm Battery Park Pavillion

**Pulmonary rehabilitation** is a supervised individual exercise programme, focussing on breathing control and pacing techniques. There are also discussions about various topics relating to managing your COPD.

You will need to have an assessment at the hospital before you start this programme. Speak to your GP/Practice Nurse for referral to Pulmonary Rehabilitation.

# Breathing

## **Watch what you breathe in**

To reduce symptoms of COPD and chances of a flare-up, there are certain things that should be avoided if possible, including:

- Dusty places
- Fumes, such as car exhausts
- Smoke
- Air freshener sprays or plug-ins
- Strong-smelling cleaning products, unless there is plenty of ventilation
- Hairspray
- Perfume



## **Breathing techniques**

Breathlessness is within your control and it will not harm you. There are various breathing techniques that some people find helpful for breathlessness.

These include breathing control, which involves breathing gently, using the least effort, with the shoulders supported. This can help when people with COPD feel short of breath.

Breathing techniques for people who are more active include:

- Relaxed, slow deep breathing
- Breathing out hard when doing an activity that needs a big effort
- Paced breathing, using a rhythm in time with the activity, such as climbing stairs

# Relationships

Having a chronic condition such as COPD can put a strain on any relationship. Difficulty breathing and coughing can make people with COPD feel very tired and depressed. Partners or carers can feel anxious or frustrated about their breathing problems. It is important to talk about your worries together.



As COPD progresses, the increasing breathlessness can make it difficult to take part in some activities. The breathlessness may occur during sexual activity, which may mean your sex life can suffer.

Communicate with your partner and stay open-minded. Explore what you both like sexually. Simply touching, being touched and being close to someone helps a person feel loved and special.

You might want to talk to someone from **The Spark**: Taking time to think about your situation and talk things through with a professional counsellor can have a really positive impact – not just on your relationships but on your whole life.

## Family support

Being diagnosed with any health condition may affect your whole family. Family and friends may be worried, or may have to take on a caring role. It is important to get support before things become stressful so talk to your healthcare team about any worries you may have. **The Spark** can help with this, too and can offer local appointments.



**The Spark Appointment Booking Line**

**0845 271 2711**



**The Spark Relationship Helpline**

**0808 802 2088**



**[www.thespark.org.uk](http://www.thespark.org.uk)**

## **Family support (continued)**

Family and friends can contact Inverclyde Carers Centre who can provide dedicated support to them.



**Inverclyde Carers Centre      01475 735180**

Being open about how you feel and what your family and friends can do to help may put them at ease. But don't feel shy about telling them that you need some time to yourself, if that's what you want.

It's important that you discuss any worries or problems you have with your doctor or nurse if you feel unable to talk to your family or friends. Your doctor or nurse will be able to advise you and arrange support. You may also find it useful to join a support group where you can talk to other people with lung conditions whose experiences are similar to yours.



**Inverclyde COPD Support Group**  
**1st Tuesday of the month, 1pm to 3pm,**  
**Your Voice, 12 Clyde Square, Greenock**

Inverclyde Council on Disability also offers a range of services to local disabled people, their families and carers to help maximise their:

- Financial Wellbeing
- Independence
- Social Inclusion
- Digital Learning and Digital Inclusion



**Inverclyde Council on Disability      01475 732700**

You can also contact the British Lung Foundation for support:



**British Lung Foundation      03000 030 555**



**www.blf.org.uk      or      email: [helpline@blf.org.uk](mailto:helpline@blf.org.uk)**

## **Family support (continued)**

This information will be useful to your Carer, if you have one...

### **Support for Carers**

#### **DO YOU LOOK AFTER SOMEONE WHO COULD NOT MANAGE WITHOUT YOU?**

Maybe they rely on you for physical, emotional or practical support because of their illness and you don't know where to turn. It could be your Mum, Dad, child or a young person. Even a relative, friend or neighbour.

If your answer is yes, then you are a Carer and support is available for you, too.

Registering as a Carer is simple. It involves a short discussion with staff to gather your contact details and information about your caring role. This can take place in the centre, at one of our many Outreach surgeries or a home visit which can also be arranged for Carers who cannot leave their home due to their caring role.

Carer Support Workers are available to provide information, support and advice around issues relating to your caring role or simply for you as an individual. This could be around:

- Benefits advice
- Meeting other Carers
- Emotional support
- Breaks from caring
- Health and Care services
- Hospital discharge
- Planning for the future
- Carers Rights and Entitlements

The needs of Carers are our number one priority.



**Inverclyde Carers Centre**

**01475 735180**

# Planning for the future

## Work and benefits

People with COPD sometimes have to give up work because their breathlessness stops them from doing what they need to do for their job. This can cause financial pressure.



**Inverclyde Advice First** is a free phone helpline where skilled advisers provide initial advice to try and resolve problems at the first point of contact. Where people are at serious financial risk, face to face appointments with staff will be available the same day.

## Want to know more?

You are entitled to a benefits check to ensure you are receiving the right amount. The organisations listed below can help you with this:



**Inverclyde Advice First**

**01475 715299**



**Inverclyde Council on Disability**

**01475 732700**



**Employability (at the Trust)**

**01475 553344**



**Inverclyde Carers Centre**

**01475 735180**

Inverclyde Carers Centre can help Carers to plan for short and long term care and provide support in emergency situations, should these arise. This can reduce the distress and anxiety experienced by you both where carers are not able to provide support. Planning for the future can avoid unnecessary admissions to hospital.

## Driving

It's important to make sure that you are well enough, and that your condition does not affect your ability to drive.



Anyone who drives and has a medical condition that may affect their ability to drive must inform the Driver & Vehicle Licensing Authority (DVLA) who will assess every case individually.

Check with your insurance company to make sure you are still covered following your diagnosis.

## Inverclyde Blue Badge Scheme



**Contact Telephone**

**01475 714350**

Alternatively, visit the Do it Online section (click on Disabled Person's Parking Bay Application) of Inverclyde Council's website to complete an application form now.



## Travel

If you have severe COPD and are planning to fly, go to your GP/Practice Nurse to be referred for a fitness-to-fly assessment. This involves measuring your oxygen levels. You may need to be referred to the hospital where a test will be carried out.

Before travelling, remember to pack all your medication, such as inhalers, in your hand luggage.

It's important that you have up to date, recognised relevant vaccinations



## **Travel (continued)**

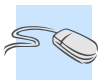
If you are using oxygen therapy, tell your travel operator and airline before you book your holiday, as you may need to get a medical form from your doctor. If you are using long-term oxygen therapy, make sure you take enough oxygen with you for your journey and arrange for oxygen at your destination. Oxygen in the UK can be arranged through your oxygen supplier.

## **Insurance**

Make sure your travel insurance covers you for any medical costs that may occur in connection with your condition.

The British Lung Foundation have a number of booklets to help you prepare for travel, which can be downloaded from their website, including:

- Going on holiday with a lung condition booklet (BK6)
- Air travel with a lung condition information sheet (IS1)
- Airline oxygen policies information sheet (IS2)
- Travel insurance information sheet (IS31)



**[www.blf.org.uk/Page/Travel](http://www.blf.org.uk/Page/Travel)**

## **Lasting Power of attorney**

When planning for the future, it is a good idea to think about a lasting Power of Attorney (LPA).



An LPA is a legal tool that enables you to appoint someone to make certain decisions on your behalf. The person you choose can manage your finances for you in the future if you reach a point where you are no longer able to make decisions for yourself.

There are two types of LPA:

- Property and Affairs
- Health and Welfare

For more information on LPAs visit:



**[www.gov.uk/power-of-attorney/overview](http://www.gov.uk/power-of-attorney/overview)**

## Where to find support

## Services

Look at what services are available to you. Even if you don't need them now, they may be useful in the future.

By using the services that you are entitled to, you can ensure that those closest to you don't have to take on all the responsibility for helping you.

Find out what services can be arranged through your doctor or Consultant.

Find out what kinds of services and support are provided by local voluntary organisations:



**Council for Voluntary Services 01475 711733**



**www.inverclydelife.com**

Contact your local Social Services department for details of services they can arrange. Find out about getting a community care assessment to assess your needs.



**Inverclyde Health & Care Partnership (formerly Social Services) 01475 715365**

# Useful contacts

Name	Contact
British Lung Foundation	Tel: 03000 030 555 Web: <a href="http://www.blf.org.uk">www.blf.org.uk</a> Email: <a href="mailto:helpline@blf.org.uk">helpline@blf.org.uk</a>
Council for Voluntary Services	Tel: 01475 711733
Inverclyde Advice First	Tel: 01475 715299
Inverclyde Carer's Centre	Tel: 01475 735180
Inverclyde Community Health & Care Partnership	Tel: 01475 715365
Inverclyde Council on Disability	Tel: 01475 732700
Live Active	Tel: 01475 715786

# Useful contacts

(continued)

Name	Contact
NHS 24	Tel: 111
NHS Choices	Web: <a href="http://www.nhs.uk">www.nhs.uk</a>
Power of Attorney Advice	Web: <a href="http://www.gov.uk/power-of-attorney/overview">www.gov.uk/power-of-attorney/overview</a>
Smokefree Services	Tel: 01475 501226
The Spark	Relationship Helpline: 0808 802 2088 Appointment Booking: 08452712711
Your Voice	Tel: 01475 728628

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