

## COPD AND ME

### 5. Exercise, COPD and Me

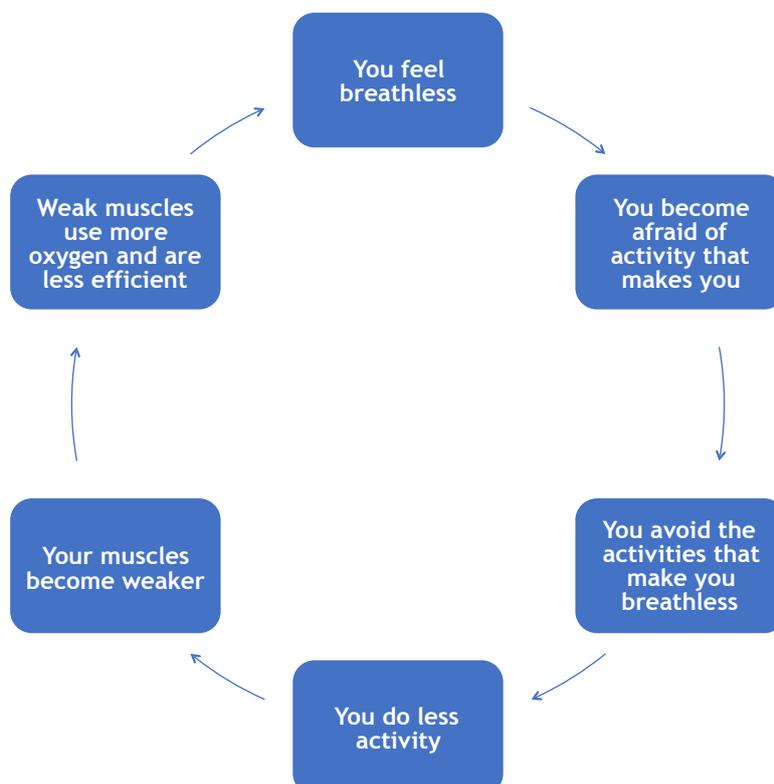
*“I wouldn’t be able to exercise. It makes me too breathless. Wouldn’t exercise make this worse?”*

It’s very normal to feel this way if you’re short of breath with COPD. Exercise, done in a structured safe and controlled way, is one of the best things you can do to improve your breathlessness.

Many people with COPD find that being short of breath is the hardest part of their condition to deal with. Breathlessness causes people to do less and less activities. The less you do, the less you are able to do. This can lead to your muscles becoming weaker and eventually it can become difficult to do much at all

#### Cycle of Inactivity

*“How can I break this cycle and how can exercise help me and my lung condition?”*



It may come as a surprise but breathlessness when you exercise is good for you. It is a normal response to physical activity. Breathlessness may occur more easily and more often when you have COPD but that does not mean that activity should be avoided.

Weaker muscles require more oxygen to work. Exercising regularly can make your muscles stronger so that they require less oxygen to do the same amount of work. If you avoid activity that makes you breathless, then muscles tend to weaken and this can lead to more breathlessness.

Exercise cannot reverse COPD, but it can change how you control your breathlessness, improve fitness levels and improve your quality of life. It has a positive impact on both your physical and mental wellbeing.

It is important that you pace yourself, but the more you do the more that you will be able to do.

#### Tips for Safe Exercise

- Please consult your health care professional before starting any new exercise regime
- Do not exercise if you feel unwell
- Drink plenty of water throughout the day
- You should be able to talk whilst exercising
- Stop the exercise if you become too breathless

## 5.2 Home Exercises

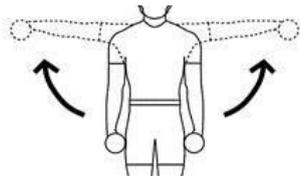
Make some kind of exercise a part of your daily routine. Walking for fitness is one of the best things that you can do but in times of poor weather it can be difficult to get out, so you will need to have a plan B.

Here are some exercises that can be easily done at home.

### Arm Wings

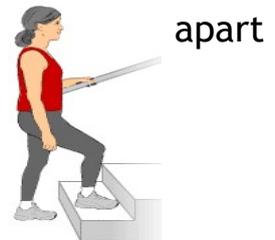
- Stand or sit with hand weights or water bottles
- raise your arms out to each side to shoulder height and then lower

- repeat as often as you are comfortable.



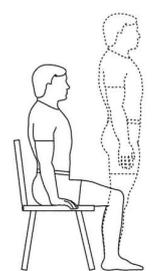
### Step Ups

- Hold onto the rail and keep legs shoulder width
- step up onto the bottom step of the stairs
- step down again
- repeat as often as you are comfortable.



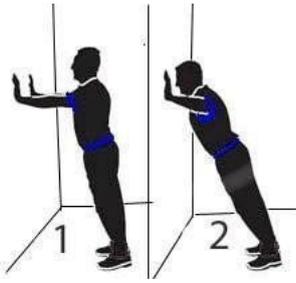
### Sit to Stand Exercise

- Stand from a seated position
- Keep your feet shoulder width apart
- repeat as often as you feel comfortable.



### Wall Press

- Stand in front of a wall and lift your arms up to shoulder height
- place your palms against the wall so that they are slightly wider than your shoulders
- lean your body forward but keep your back straight
- push off the wall until your arms are in an outstretched position with elbows slightly bent
- repeat as often as you are comfortable.



You can contact COPD Support Ireland to check out if there are exercise classes in your area with the local COPD Support Group.

**Exercise has a similar shelf life to that of milk - if you don't keep it fresh it goes sour very quickly.**

### 5.3 Pulmonary Rehabilitation

*“It's provided me with the tools to help me live better with my condition.”*

Pulmonary rehabilitation (PR) is one of the most important things you can do to better manage your COPD. It is usually a 6 to 8 week group programme with two structured exercise sessions a week. You will work with a team of healthcare professionals who will help you to exercise safely and to manage your COPD better. The knowledge and skills you gain during the 6 to 8 weeks will help you to stay healthy and active long after you complete the programme.

The PR programme will cover different aspects of managing your COPD:

- airway clearance
- medications
- nutrition
  
- coping with breathlessness and relaxation techniques
- Oxygen treatment if needed

- pacing yourself, learn how to do everyday tasks with less shortness of breath and
- how to stay healthy and avoid COPD flare ups (exacerbations).

In addition, you will also meet people with COPD, who have many of the same experiences, questions and feelings that you do.

You may only be able to begin exercising at a slow pace. You will start at 30 seconds for each exercise. **This is okay.** If you require supplemental oxygen you can use it. Your oxygen level, heart rate and blood pressure will be monitored so you can exercise safely and effectively. You will be amazed at how much you can achieve through the classes.

### **What Can I do?**

You should speak to your healthcare professional and ask to be referred to a local pulmonary rehabilitation programme. You will be assessed by the PR team prior to starting on a programme. These assessments will be completed again at the end of the programme.

It is important that everybody that is suitable for PR tries to attend a programme. It is also vitally important that you keep doing what you have learned so that you continue to get the benefits of regular exercise, either at home or at a local exercise class in your area.

## **5.4 Energy Conservation**

Energy Conservation is changing the way you do activities to reduce the amount of energy needed. Success in energy conservation depends on how well you plan your day by keeping a balance of work, rest and play.

To conserve energy, follow the 4 P's:

- Prioritise
- Pacing

- Planning
- Posture

### Prioritise

- Make a list of what you have to do
- Prioritise tasks into what you need to do, want to do and should do
- Eliminate any unnecessary tasks
- Decide if someone else can do some tasks for you
- Alternate between light and heavy tasks.

### Pacing

- Work at a slow steady pace
- Allow plenty of time for rest and relaxation, at least 5 - 10 minutes every hour
- Use shortness of breath as a guide
- Space difficult and strenuous tasks evenly throughout the week.

### Planning

- Modify activities to reduce the effort you need to do the job
- Sit rather than stand when possible
- Organise yourself, your home and your working environment
- Put items you frequently use in a convenient place
- Consider using a bag or basket to carry things
- Plan tasks around when help is available and when your energy levels are high.

### Posture

- Push or pull objects, rather than lifting
- Use with your legs, not your back
- Use your strongest, largest joints
- Minimise your arm movements
- Avoid bending, reaching or twisting.

## What can I do?

- Follow the 4 P's
- Eliminate unnecessary tasks
- Remember that just because you can't manage to do all the activities you used to, it doesn't mean you can't live a full life.

**Need our help? Call the COPD ADVICELINE 1800 831 2146**