

# How to stay well at home with a lung condition during COVID-19

Advice from your local respiratory services in Cornwall.

Summary guide for patients

Version 1 March 2020



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## What is COVID-19 and what should I do now?

COVID-19 is an illness that is transmitted by the coronavirus which originated in China at the beginning this year.

It causes severe breathing difficulties that can lead people to needing to go to hospital for oxygen and breathing support on a ventilator. This treatment could be in limited supply in the coming weeks if high numbers of people become unwell.

The UK Government has told everyone in the country they must isolate at home to help the NHS fight the global coronavirus outbreak and save lives.

### What should I do now?

#### **Stay at home and do not go out**

If you have any long term lung condition you are in the **high risk** category which need to be **“shielded”** from coronavirus. This also applies to anyone over age 70 and other vulnerable people in society.

#### **The current UK government and NHS advice:**

- ✓ **Stay at home at all times** – do not leave your home to buy food, collect medicine or exercise
- ✓ **Stay at least 2 meters (3 steps) away**- from other people in your home as much as possible
- ✓ **Get food and medicine delivered and left outside your door** – ask friends and family to help or if you need it
- ✓ **Prepare a hospital bag, including a list of the medicines you're taking** – in case you need to go into hospital
- ✓ **Wash your hands with soap and water often** – do this for at least 20 seconds
- ✓ **Make sure anyone who comes into your home washes their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds**
- ✓ **Use hand sanitiser gel**- if soap and water are not available

- ✓ **Clean objects and surfaces you touch often** -like door handles, kettles and phones) using your regular cleaning products
- ✓ **Clean a shared bathroom each time you use it**-wiping the surfaces you have touched
- × **Do not have visitors in your home**- including friends and family, unless they're providing essential care
- × **Do not stop taking any prescription medicines**- without speaking to your doctor.

### How do I stay up to date on the situation?

**Make sure information is reliable.** Be aware of “fake news”. These are good sources:

- BBC channels: local and national TV, radio online  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news>
- NHS: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
- UK government: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus> or send a WhatsApp message saying “Hi” to 07860 064422 receive updates from the UK government.

In some circumstances you may be able to access this app for free. Email: [cft.westcornwallrespiratory@nhs.net](mailto:cft.westcornwallrespiratory@nhs.net) to find out more.

### Pulmonary rehabilitation

Pulmonary rehabilitation is evidence based prescribed exercise and education programme for people with long term respiratory conditions which improve self-management skills, health related quality of life, ability with activities of daily living and coping skills for breathlessness. After the COVID-19 outbreak is over ask your GP or healthcare professional if you can be referred.



Produced by the West Cornwall Respiratory Service, Helston Community Hospital. Email: [cft.westcornwallrespiratory@nhs.net](mailto:cft.westcornwallrespiratory@nhs.net)

**With thanks for contributions from with contributions from RCHT, CFT, KCCG, Cornwall Council and Voluntary Services.**

## How do I stay active?

The government guidelines say adults should do 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise per week (or 30 mins a day for 5 days a week) to stay healthy. This applies to people with and without long term health conditions. Moderate intensity implies that you could not say more than one word at a time before needing breath if you had to talk whilst exercising.

To stay active within your home environment you don't need much space or equipment.

### Top tips for exercising at home

- **Be creative**- if you don't have weights you can use tin cans or bottles filled with water.
- **Make it fun**- learn something new, do what you love.
- **Join in a "class"** – exercise along to a video/DVD or find classes that offer interactive sessions over the internet (e.g. via ZOOM).
- **Get fresh air and sunlight** –you must be able to do this safely and without coming into contact with others outside of your household (e.g. your own garden, balcony, doorway). Have the windows open when exercising.
- **Set goals and record your success**- work towards something meaningful to you and keep a diary of daily achievements.
- **Get breathless to get fit**- breathlessness is a normal response to exercise no matter how fit you is. Look at *managing breathlessness* section for techniques to help you cope with this when exercising.

### Stay active, stay well programme- British Lung Foundation

[www.blf.org.uk/exercise-video](http://www.blf.org.uk/exercise-video)

Other helpful resources:

- **MyCOPD** <https://mymhealth.com/mycopd>
- **MyAsthma** <https://mymhealth.com/myasthma>

## How to look after myself during self-isolation?

### Set up delivery services for food and medicines

If you are unable to do this yourself phone and ask a family member or friend for help or the voluntary service.

### Stay connected

Try phoning or texting to "check-in" with relatives and friends daily. If you have access to the internet or a smart phone think about using other messaging services and video calling to help you see them.

### Keep active

Being at home doesn't mean being inactive. There are many sources on the internet providing free online remote exercise classes for fitness, yoga, Tai Chi. Try something new! See the *How do I stay active?* Section or look at home exercises here: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/easy-low-impact-exercises/>

### Eat well

Being a healthy weight and can reduce your risk of chest infections. Monitor and record it every month. Being underweight may mean you don't getting the important nutrients and energy you need, leaving you malnourished which can weaken muscles important in breathing. Being overweight puts additional strain on your organs. Even people who are overweight can suffer from malnutrition, so make sure you eat a balanced diet.

Stay well hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids like water (6-8 glasses a day) unless advised not to by a healthcare professional.

Visit the British Lung Foundation websites for helpful information on eating well with a lung condition. <https://www.blf.org.uk/support-for-you/eating-well>

The website is good if you have COPD:

<https://www.copdfoundation.org>

### **Mental wellbeing.**

Many people are feeling worried and anxious about the impact the coronavirus outbreak is having on them and their families.

### **Tips for looking after yourself:**

- **Stay connected, keep active, eat well** and use **reliable sources of information.**
- **Don't start or increase harmful activities** such as heavy drinking or smoking.
- **Control of anxiety related to your breathlessness.** Do slow gentle breathing control techniques every day (*see managing breathlessness*). Learning this now to help manage your breathing automatically if you fell anxious or "panicky".
- **Try mindfulness**

Try searching the internet for websites or videos that suit you best.

Examples:

- <https://www.stchristophers.org.uk/video-exercise-relaxation/>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>  
<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/getting-help>
- [www.Mindful.org](http://www.Mindful.org)

Try an app. Some free and others have free trials which are extending during COVID-19. Examples:

- **Smiling Mind**- free daily meditation <https://www.smilingmind.com.au/>
- **Calm**- great for beginners [www.calm.com](http://www.calm.com)
- **Headspace**- best known app [www.headspace.com/](http://www.headspace.com/)
- **Insight timer**- free guided meditation [www.insighttimer.com](http://www.insighttimer.com)

## **What if I'm having problems with my swallow, mouth or voice?**

Being breathless, having respiratory problems or a weak cough may make it difficult to swallow safely and increase your risk of developing chest infections, so it is important to be aware what to look out for and to let your GP or local respiratory service know. You may need to be referred to a speech and language therapist.

**Signs of swallowing problems** may be having frequent chest infections or repeated choking or coughing episodes when eating or drinking.

### **How to help the swallow**

Sit as upright to eat, use your oxygen (via nasal prongs if you can) eat smaller meals and softer, easy chew foods. Take small sips and mouthfuls at a time. Limit distraction. Select high calorie options if you struggle to eat much. Stay upright for about 30 minutes after a meal to reduce the chance of reflux.

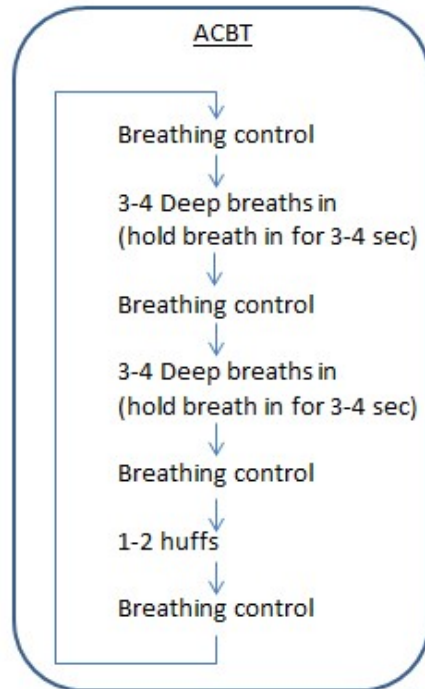
**Prevent a dry mouth** - Sip water regularly, use substitutes for saliva if needed, suck sugarfree sweets or chew sugarfree gum, reduce alcohol and caffeine intake, avoid smoking, use gentle oral products that don't contain alcohol, rinse mouth after steroid inhaler use and practice good mouth cleaning.

**Practice good oral hygiene** - Brush teeth, gums and tongue (and sweep around roof of mouth and inside cheeks) with fluoride toothpaste for at least two minutes twice a day - spit don't rinse to keep fluoride on teeth. If you don't have teeth still brush mouth and clean dentures.

**Look after your voice by drinking plenty of water** and avoiding lots of caffeine, alcohol and spicy foods. Avoid excessive coughing and throat clearing.

**If your voice changes and you don't know the cause it is important to let your GP know.**

1. **Breathing control**- relaxed gentle breaths. Put a hand on your tummy and breathe quietly and gently without forcing breaths. Feel your hand rise with the breath in and fall with the breath out. Shoulders, neck and body should be relaxed. Do this for 30+ seconds. Also use this for relaxation or if you feel anxious to “reset” breathing.



2. **Deep breaths in**- chest expanding breaths. Take a long slow deep breath in starting from the tummy then filling up from the bottom of the chest. You will feel your ribs move out and up but try to keep shoulders and arms relaxed. Once lungs are full hold your breath in for 3-4 seconds. Then let breath fall out of your mouth. Repeat up to 4 times in a row but no more. If you get dizzy do fewer breaths. **Repeat steps 1 and 2 until you feel secretions moving in your chest, then:**

3. **Huff**- with your mouth open in an “o” shape and back of the throat relaxed take a medium size breath in and force it out quickly (as if steaming up a mirror). If your secretions do not clear to avoid coughing and instead go back to repeating a few cycles steps 1 and 2 until you are ready to huff again.

**Important:** Avoid long, fast and hard huffs if wheezy. Do gentler, shorter and slower ones. Limit coughing to two coughs then try to suppress with breathing control and sips of water.

## What is I am struggling to cope with things at home?

Make sure you let family, friends and neighbours know as they will want to help if they are able and it is safe for them to do so. If you have a carer (or are a carer yourself) try to organise what you will do if either or you become ill.

### **Some services which are available:**

#### **GOV.UK**

Register online to get support or get a family member to do it for you  
Website: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable>

#### **Volunteer Cornwall**

Tel: 01872 266988

Email: [requestforhelp@volunteercornwall.org.uk](mailto:requestforhelp@volunteercornwall.org.uk)

Website: <https://www.volunteercornwall.org.uk/>

#### **Age UK Cornwall**

Tel: 01872266383

Email: [email@ageukcornwall.org.uk](mailto:email@ageukcornwall.org.uk)

Website: <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/cornwall/>

#### **Cornwall Council**

Tel: 0300 1234 100

Email: [Accessteam.referral@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:Accessteam.referral@cornwall.gov.uk)

Website: <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/>

#### **Local Facebook Groups**

If you use Facebook there are lots of local groups popping up to help with shopping, medication delivery and dog walking. Just search in your local area and send a message about the help you need.

#### **Cornwall neighborhood for change (CN4C) crisis helplines**

- 10am to 4pm 7 days a week on 07592 876755

- 9am to 5pm Tuesday to Friday on 07507 412941
- 10am to 4pm Mondays on 07535 036658
- 4pm to 7pm Tuesday to Friday on 07971 184465

### Valued Lives crisis service

Tel: 01209901438 Email: [info@valuedlives.co.uk](mailto:info@valuedlives.co.uk)

### Kernow Carers

Help and support for informal and unpaid carers

Tel: 0800 587 8191 Website: [www.supportincornwall.org.uk](http://www.supportincornwall.org.uk)

See their Facebook page @Kernowcarersservice for daily live Q&A sessions 12.00-13.00

### Samaritans

For mental health support

Telephone: 116 123 (24 hours a day, free to call) Email:

[jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org) Website: [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

### Corona Voice Project

For coronavirus related stress, anxiety or distress- offering 6 free sessions via telephone or face to face. Email:

[rachel@pegasusmenswellbeing.co.uk](mailto:rachel@pegasusmenswellbeing.co.uk) and include CORONA VOICE PROJECT in the subject.

### Outlook South West

Support with mental health and wellbeing

Website: [www.outlooksw.co.uk](http://www.outlooksw.co.uk)

## How to I keep my chest clear?

Having some loose salivary secretions is normal. Some people with lung conditions produce more secretions which can get trapped. **It is important to not just use coughing** and instead use airway clearance techniques which will not irritate your lungs.

### What helps to move secretions that are trapped in my lungs?

- **Stay hydrated** –keep mucus loose
- **Exercising daily**- to open and stretch the lungs
- **Ensure relaxed, open airways**- used your prescribed bronchodilators (airway openers) and inhaled maintenance therapies (steroids) help with this, even if you feel well.
- **Have good posture** - sitting upright with a good posture in a supported chair will allow your lungs to open and stretch best. Try to avoid being still for long periods in the day as this causes lungs to close down, which can lead to secretion trapping, bacteria build up and chest infections.

### What airway clearance technique should I learn?

#### Learn the Active Cycle of Breathing Technique or “ACBT”

It can help to watch a video: <https://youtu.be/qpzJmitir08>

#### Before your start:

- Have water and tissues nearby and take 2x puffs of your reliever inhaler to relax and open airways 20 mins before.
- Find a quiet area, sit up in a chair and use pillows to support your body so you re relaxed (but not slumped).
- Do ACBT before any steroid and long acting bronchodilator medications if you can. This will increase their benefits.

### How do I do ACBT?



candle or whistle. Blow out for as long as is comfortable but don't force your lungs to empty.

### Blow-as-you-go

Makes effortful tasks easier. Use this with the pursed lip breathing.

- Breathe in before you make the effort e.g. before lifting a heavy bag, going up a step or standing from a chair.
- Then breathe out while making the effort e.g. lifting the bag, stepping up the step or standing up.

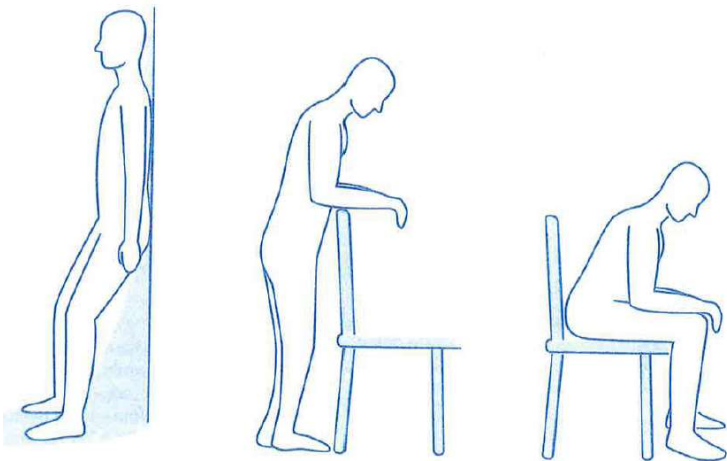
### Paced breathing

Use with pursed-lip and blow-as-you-go techniques

- **Walking:** Count to yourself 1 as you breathe in and then count 2 or 3 as you breathe out. Try to breathe out longer than breathing in.
- **Climbing stairs:** breathe in and out in time with the steps you take. Do this in a rhythm that suits you.

### Positioning

When you get out of breath try these positions to help you recover more quickly. If these don't help try sitting upright in a supportive chair with your arms and shoulders relaxed.



Picture from [bfl.org.uk](http://bfl.org.uk)

## What if my symptoms get worse during COVID-19?

### What are my symptoms when well?

#### Record your usual symptoms when you feel well.

Date completed:

**Breathlessness** –tick the one which applies to you

1. Not troubled by breathlessness except on strenuous exercise
2. Short of breath when hurrying or walking up a slight hill
3. Walks slower than others (the same age) on level ground because of breathlessness or has to stop for breath when walking at own pace
4. Stops for breath after walking 100m or after a few minutes on level ground
5. Too breathless to leave the house or breathlessness when undressing

**Secretions (phlegm/ sputum/ mucus)**

- Normal colour:
- Amount produced each day:

**Cough**

- Normally have cough?

**Anything else?**

### What should I do to keep myself well?

**Try to prevent yourself from having a flare up in the first place;**

- Exercise daily
- Eat a good balanced diet
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Do not smoke
- Don't let your medications run out

- Take all medication as prescribed, whether you think they help or not
- Have flu and pneumonia vaccines that are offered to you

### What do I need to look out for?

#### Look out for these symptoms and act on them early;

- A new/ increased “chesty” cough
- Increased amount of secretions and/or change in colour from normal. May be thicker or harder to clear.
- Feeling more breathless than normal
- Feeling more wheezy than normal.
- Feel hot to touch on chest or back.
- Reduced energy levels and loss of appetite.

### What should I do if I have any of these new symptoms?

#### Follow this general advice:

- Check your inhaler technique and use a spacer (see section)
- Increase the number of puffs and frequency of reliever inhaler
- Remain as active within your house to prevent deconditioning
- Get plenty of sleep and rest
- Eat little and often
- Stop smoking and avoid any environmental triggers or irritants
- Drink plenty of fluids to stop you getting dehydrated
- Increase /start airway clearance and breathing techniques (see *managing breathlessness* and *airway clearance* in this booklet).
- Take hygiene precautions. Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze and throw away used tissues immediately. Wash your hands regularly.
- Monitor your symptoms closely- if they improve over the next few days continue your usual medication

## How do I manage my breathlessness?

### Top tips for managing breathlessness

- **Try not to panic** when - know that your breathing will settle.
- **Use a handheld fan** or sit by an open window
- **Try not to hold your breath** whilst doing activity or exercise
- **Don't avoid doing things**, instead pace yourself
- **Plan your day**, break up activities to conserve energy
- **Use the breathing techniques** practice for when you need them
- **Find ways to simplify activities.** E.g sit down to prepare meals
- **Keep your clothes loose and items that are easy to put on**
- **Use a toweling robe** after a bath or shower-easier than a towel
- **Use a wheeled walking frame** to give extra support
- **Some carrying a stick** if they feel self-conscious about walking slowly due to their breathing.

Using these breathing techniques will enable you to do more

### Breathing Control

For breathlessness, relaxation and panic attacks.

- Breathe in and out gently and quietly through your nose. You can breathe out through your mouth if unable to do this. This should be relaxed, not forced.
- Let go of tension in your body with each breath out and gradually slow breathing. Close eyes to help you focus and try to relax arms and neck. Put your hand on your tummy and feel it rise and fall with your breathing. Use visual imagery if it helps.

### Pursed-lip breathing

To control breathing doing something that makes you breathless like walking or making the bed.

- As you start to exert yourself, slow down your breathing and breathe in more deeply.
- Breathe in gently through your nose if you can. Blow out through your lips as though you were going to blow out a

If you are due to have more puffs you should **wait one minute** between each pump to allow it to “recharge”. Not waiting will mean you only inhale the gas inside the pump and not the active medications.

Watch this video to refresh your technique:

<https://www.asthma.org.uk/advice/inhaler-videos/tidal-breathing/>

### Looking after your spacer.

Clean your spacer **once a week** and replace it **at least every year**, especially if you use it daily or sooner if it gets damaged.

Use a gentle detergent, such as washing-up liquid to clean it. Only a small number of brands of spacer are dishwasher safe, so check the instructions on the label. Be careful not to scrub the inside of your spacer as this might affect the way it works. You can scrub the outside of the spacer and the mouthpiece

Watch this video about what to do <https://youtu.be/noWzhwDBagI>



### What if my new symptoms have not improved after 2 days?

A chest infection may clear up gradually without any treatment. You may have been prescribed these in a “rescue pack”.

- If you continue to feel more breathless despite having increased reliever medication- take **steroids**  
OR
- If you continue to feel more breathless AND have an increased amount and/ or change in the colour of secretions - take **antibiotics and steroids**

### Remember:

- Tell your doctor if you have started your “recue pack”
- Contact your local respiratory service for advice, especially if you use oxygen
- Take paracetamol (if you can) to reduce temperature and pain.
- Continue with all the recommendations the previous section
- Keep a diary/ record of your flare ups – this will help you doctor and respiratory team manage your condition.

### What if I have been on antibiotics/steroids for a few days and feel no better?

#### Contact you GP and local respiratory service again if;

- You do not feel better after 2-3 days of after taking prescribed antibiotics or steroids as you may need a longer course or a different antibiotic.
- You have had more than one rescue pack in a month

Important: always complete the full course if you start your rescue pack even if you begin to feel well again (unless told not to do so by your healthcare professional).

**Your GP may discuss a treatment escalation plan (TEP) with you to make a plan for future care if you should become more unwell.** This may involve discussing which treatments are right for you, including decisions about admission to hospital or community based care.

### **COVID-19**

If you have fever and a new cough you should suspect COVID-19 and must isolate yourself from others in your household if you can. **If you are not coping at home due to your symptoms contact NHS 111 for advice**

**If you are struggling to breathe and have sudden shortness of breath and have any of the below symptoms:**

- Your chest feels heavy and tight and your reliever inhaler doesn't help
- You have chest pain or pain radiating to arm, back, neck or jaw
- You have a high fever
- You feel or are being sick
- There are signs of confusion, agitation or drowsiness.

**\*\*\*This is an emergency and you should call an 999\*\*\***

### **Recovery**

It can take weeks to months to recover fully after a flare up. It is really important to follow the general advice about staying well and try to begin exercising again to keep your lungs healthy.

**If you cannot access the internet follow these steps:**

1. Prepare the inhaler device by following the packet instructions.
2. Ensure upright posture in sitting or standing
3. Breathe out to empty your lungs
4. Place inhaler mouthpiece into mouth and seal lips around it
5. Breathe in ;
  - a. **Slow and steady** = Metered Dose Inhaler or Soft Mist Inhaler **OR**
  - b. **Fast and quick** = Dry Powder Inhaler.
6. Hold your breath in for as long as you can
7. Wait 1 minute before taking the next dose (if prescribed).
8. Rinse your mouth (and spit out) after any steroid inhaler
9. Replace any caps or lids to keep the inhaler clean.

### **Why use a spacer with my Metered Dose Inhalers (MDI)?**

Spacers make it easier to get the right amount of medicine into your lungs and reduce any side effects.

**The “tidal or multiple breathing” spacer technique suits most people and is the easiest:**

1. Take off the cap and hold your inhaler upright.
2. Check there's nothing inside the mouthpiece
3. Shake the inhaler well
4. Put the inhaler into the end of your spacer, with the indent for your nose pointing upwards
5. Put the mouthpiece between your teeth and lips, making a seal so no medicine can escape
6. Sit or stand up straight and slightly tilt your chin up as it helps the medicine reach your lungs
7. Press the canister to put one puff of your medicine into the spacer
8. Breathe in and out slowly and steadily five times through the mouthpiece. There is no need to do deep breaths in or out or hold your breath.

- These relax the muscles around your airways, to help keep your airways open and prevent symptoms such as breathlessness. They last at least 12 hours.
- They do not treat the inflammation in your airways so continue to take any prescribed preventer medicine.

### Combination inhalers

- A combination inhaler has two or more of the above medicines in one device

### How do I use my inhalers?

It is important to use the right breathing technique with each type of inhaler. Check which device(s) you have so you know which one to use.

#### The “Slow and Steady” Breath Technique- use with:

- Metered dose inhalers (MDI): spray of medication  
*e.g. Salbutamol, Clenil®, Easi-breathe®, Autohaler®, Trimbow®*
- Soft Mist Inhalers (SMI): gentle mist of medication  
*e.g. Respimat® Spirivia® or Respimat® Spiolto®*

#### The “Quick and Deep” Breath Technique- use with

- Dry powder inhalers (DPI): device or capsule containing powder  
*e.g. Nexthaler® (e.g. Fostair®), Breezhaler® (e.g. Seebri®), Accuhaler® (e.g. Seretide®) Turbohaler® (e.g. Symbicort®), Spiromax® (e.g. DuoResp®), Genuair® (e.g. Duaklir®), Easyhaler® (e.g. Salbutamol), Ellipta® and Zonda® (e.g. Braltus).*

### Your inhaler technique

You may not be able to see your healthcare professional during COVID-19 so check your technique by watching the videos on this web page:  
<https://www.asthma.org.uk/inhalervideos>

Try to always use your MDI with a spacer device See *using a spacer with Metered Dose Inhalers (MDI)* for this technique.

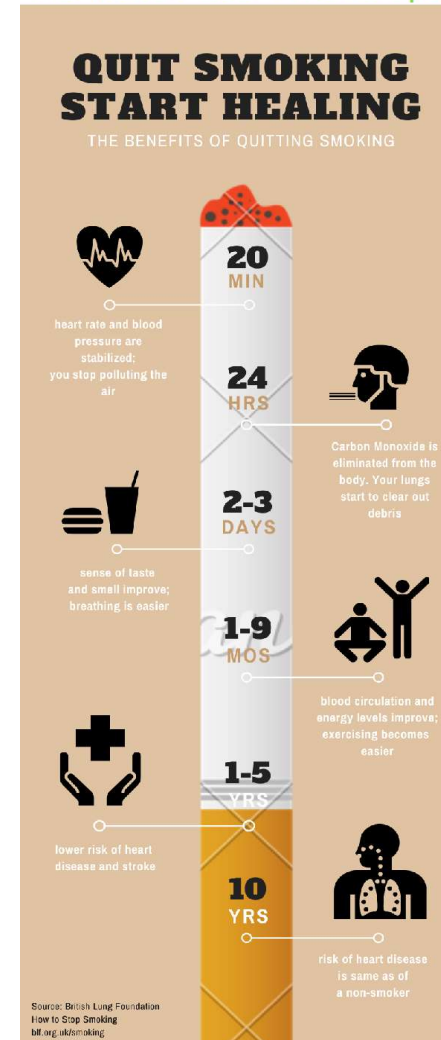
## Why should I think about quitting smoking?

Quitting is one of the best ways to protect yourself and your household from coronavirus. Smokers are **five times** more likely to get flu and **twice** as likely to get pneumonia.

<https://www.nhs.uk/smokefree> or search for the Smokefree app

# How to stop smoking

It's never too late to quit



### Why is smoking bad for me?

Tobacco smoke contains over 5,000 chemicals including nicotine which is highly addictive. Smokers smoke for the nicotine but are harmed by the tar and other chemicals. Many of the chemicals cause cancer and include poisons such as hydrogen cyanide, carbon monoxide and ammonia. When you smoke these chemicals can damage your lungs but also pass into your blood and spread through your body.

### Why should I stop?

There is never a bad time to stop smoking and it is never too late. Stopping smoking is the best step you can take for your health. It will stop your condition getting worse and it will improve your quality of life. Not only will stopping smoking improve your lung function, it will improve your family and friends lives. Breathing in passive smoke can be just as dangerous and they are at risk of getting the same diseases as a smoker.

### How can I stop?

Get support. It is hard to change a long-term habit but you don't have to do it on your own. With the right support from friends, family and professionals you are more likely to succeed. visit [nhs.uk/smokefree](https://www.nhs.uk/smokefree) or visit your GP surgery who can refer you to a stop smoking service. Pharmacists are also able to help quit smoking.

**You're more likely to stop successfully if you use a combination of stop smoking treatments and specialist help.**

## First steps to stop smoking

- Ask for help from your family, friends and GP
- Get rid of everything in your home or work that reminds you of smoking
- Call yourself a non-smoker and think of yourself as one
- Think about the future benefits and how much better you feel soon

## Where can I get help and support for my lung condition?

The NHS is asking everyone to try and access some medical help remotely rather than face-to-face to limit the spread of coronavirus. Routine appointments may be postponed. If you usually see a healthcare professional about your respiratory condition you can contact them but be aware there may be a delay in non-urgent cases.

### **Use the NHS 111 online coronavirus service if:**

- you feel you can't cope with your symptoms at home
- your condition gets worse
- your symptoms do not get better after 7 days

These charities can offer advice and support

#### **British Lung Foundation**

Tel: 03000 030 555

Website: <https://www.blf.org.uk/support-for-you/coronavirus>

#### **Asthma UK**

Tel: 0300 222 5800

Website: <https://www.asthma.org.uk/coronavirus>

#### **Action for Pulmonary Fibrosis**

Tel: 01223 785725

Website: <https://www.actionpulmonaryfibrosis.org/coronavirus/>

#### **Sarcoidosis UK**

Tel: 020 3389 7221.

Website: <https://www.sarcoidosisuk.org/information-hub/coronavirus/home/>

#### **Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation**

Tel: 0800 358 7200

Website: <https://www.roycastle.org/covid-19/>

## What if I'm struggling with my inhalers?

### **Inhalers: medications to help your breathing**

People who do not use their inhalers often experience more flare ups of their condition have more chest infections and spend more time in hospital or at the GP. This can impact on your mental and physical wellbeing.

### **What do my inhalers do?**

Most people have a reliever inhaler but may also have one or more other types wither in single devices or combination inhalers.

### **Reliever inhalers**

- Work quickly to control symptoms when they happen if you feel wheezy, tight chested or very short of breath but their benefits last up to four hours.
- These are often (but not always) blue coloured devices.
- If you are taking your reliever inhaler three times a week or more it's a sign your lung condition isn't well managed and you should contact your GP or respiratory healthcare professional as you are at a higher risk of a flare up.
- If you are struggling to breathe this is an emergency situation. You can use the reliever inhaler up to 10 times (1 puff every minute over 10 minutes) and this is best done using a spacer device. If this does not help your breathing and you are experiencing an asthma attack call 999 straight away.

### **Preventer inhalers**

- Contain steroids and work to calm down the inflammation and sensitivity in your airways. Taking them every day as prescribed means you are less likely to experience symptoms as the protective effect builds up over time.

### **Long-acting bronchodilators (airway openers)**