

# Your exercise handbook

## For people living with a lung condition

---

### Before you start to exercise

We've included a full range of exercises for you to choose from. At first, choose what works best for you and what you find easiest. Then try other exercises too and aim to do a bit more each week. Choose what you enjoy doing.

You can watch the exercise programme online at [blf.org.uk/exercise](https://blf.org.uk/exercise)

Always remember to warm up before you exercise, and to cool down and stretch afterwards. If you've already been to pulmonary rehabilitation, you may know which exercises are best for you. We hope you'll see an improvement from week to week.

To start with, for each session, we recommend you spend:

- 10 minutes warming up
- 20 minutes exercising
- 10 minutes cooling down

### How active should I aim to be?

#### Sit less

This is one of the biggest changes you can make. Try to break up long periods of sitting and increase the number of steps you take every day.

#### Aerobic activity

Every week, try to do **at least 150 minutes** of activities like brisk walking, dancing, gardening, housework or the aerobic exercises. Aerobic activities work your heart and lungs. Your body warms up, your heart beats faster and your breathing is quicker and deeper than normal. Aim to get moderately out of breath – use the talk test to check you're working at the right level.

#### Strengthening activity

Aim to do the strengthening exercises to improve your muscle strength **at least twice a week**. You could also do yoga. You can do this more often if you work on different muscles each time. But give each muscle group a rest day after working them.

## Activity to improve balance and coordination

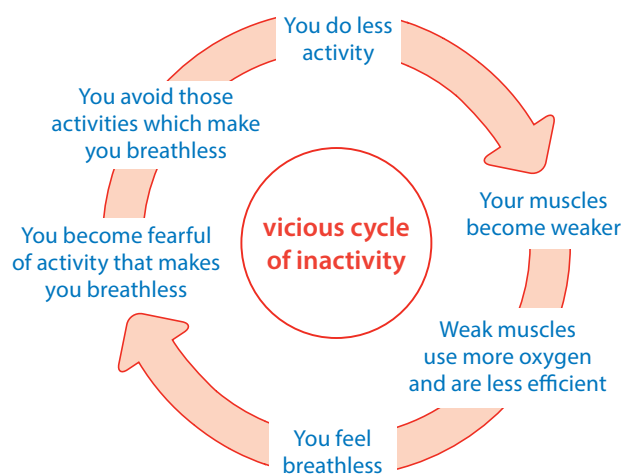
If you're older or at risk of falling, aim to include activity that improves your coordination and balance **at least one day a week**. This will help reduce your risk of falling. If you have poor balance, we've marked exercises that will help you with a star.

This might seem overwhelming - think how you could do a little every day. Even 10 minutes can make a difference. Over time, you'll get fitter and be able to do more.

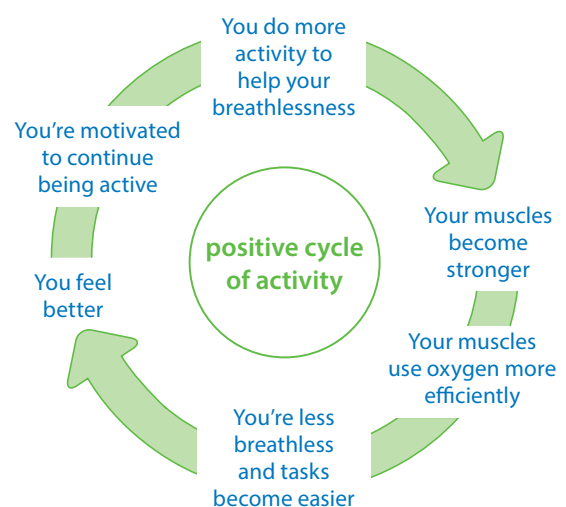
## How will being active affect my breathing?

It's normal to get breathless when you're active. But if you live with a lung condition, you may feel anxious when this happens. If you panic, it can make you feel even more breathless. The key is to stay calm and learn ways to manage your breathlessness.

Many people find it surprising, but getting breathless when you're active is good for you! If you avoid activities that make you out of breath, your muscles become weaker. Weaker muscles need more oxygen to work. Over time you'll feel more and more breathless. This is called the vicious cycle of inactivity.



The good news is you can break this vicious cycle! By becoming more active you can make your muscles stronger and improve your circulation to help your body use oxygen better. This positive cycle will help you feel less out of breath when you do everyday tasks.



# Breathing techniques to help me exercise

To help you feel in control of your breathing when you exercise, try these techniques. You can see them demonstrated at [blf.org.uk/exercise](https://blf.org.uk/exercise)

**Relaxed slow deep breathing** is very useful when you're active. Use it from the start of an activity that makes you out of breath. For example, walking or making the bed.

## How do I do it?

As you start to exert yourself, slow down your breathing and breathe in more deeply. Breathe in through your nose if you can. Use it with pursed-lips breathing or blow-as-you-go or with both other techniques.

**Pursed-lips breathing** can be used at any time to help you control your breathing. You can also use it while you are doing something that makes you breathless to help you feel less short of breath.

## How do I do it?

Breathe in gently through your nose, then purse your lips as though you were going to blow out a candle. Blow out with your lips in this pursed position. Imagine blowing out a candle when you breathe out. Blow out for as long as is comfortable – don't force your lungs to empty.

**Blow-as-you-go** helps make tasks and activities easier. Use it while you're doing something that makes you breathless. You can use it with pursed-lips breathing.

## How do I do it?

Breathe in before you make the effort. Then breathe out while you're making the effort. For example, when lifting a heavy bag, breathe in before you lift the bag, then breathe out as you lift it. Try pursing your lips as you blow out.

**Paced breathing** is useful when you are active, for example, walking or climbing stairs. You pace your steps to your breathing. You can use it at the same time as pursed-lips breathing and blow as you go.

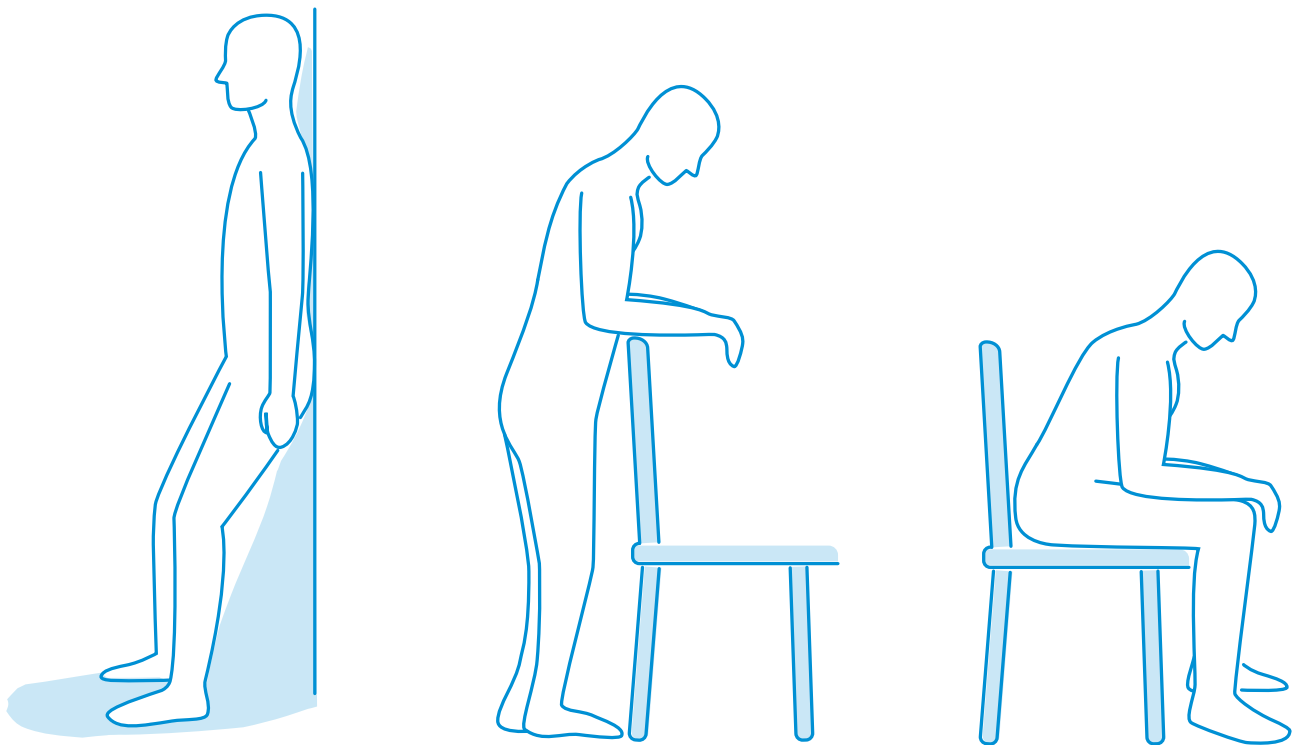
## How do I do it?

Count to yourself as you walk or move. For example, breathe in for one step and then take either one or two steps as you breathe out. Take more steps as you breathe in or as you breathe out, if that feels better for you. Try different combinations to find what works best for you - for example, one step in, two steps out.

# Positions to help you recover when you get out of breath

When you are out of breath, you can use some positions to help you to breathe more comfortably and recover more quickly.

Try one of these positions when you need to, making sure that your hands are loose and relaxed. If these positions are not comfortable, then sit upright but stay relaxed, with your arms supported.



# How can I stay safe when I exercise?

It's important to look after yourself while you're active

## Make sure you:

- start slowly and gradually build up
- warm up before and cool down after exercising
- if you use an inhaler, carry it with you, use it when you need to
- wear loose, comfortable clothing and supportive non-slip shoes, like trainers
- drink plenty of water
- wait for at least an hour after eating before you exercise
- have your reliever inhaler with you wherever you are exercising
- take your inhaler 5-20 minutes before your exercise session if you know exercise makes your chest tight or wheezy

If you have a glyceryl trinitrate (GTN) spray, have it with you.

## STOP if you get any sudden symptoms including:

- chest pain or tightness
- feeling dizzy, nauseous, clammy or cold
- feeling increasingly wheezy
- sore joints or muscle weakness

**Get advice from your GP or health care professional if you experience any of the above or call 999 in an emergency.**

### tip

**Remember**, it's not harmful for you to get out of breath when you exert yourself. Be active at a level that's right for you – use the talk test.

### The talk test

During aerobic activity, a quick way to check if you're working at the right level for you is to say out loud:

**'This activity is doing me good!'**

- If you can say the sentence with two or three stops for breath, you're working at a moderate intensity. This is your aim.
- If you can say it without stopping, increase the intensity.
- If you can't speak, or can't say more than one word at a time, slow down.

# How hard should I work?

For **aerobic activity** you want to feel **moderately** to **somewhat severely** **breathless**. You may feel slightly sweaty and your heart will beat faster too. This is normal. Use this scale to help you to see how hard you need to work – the words describe how short of breath you feel:

0	<b>Nothing at all</b>
0.5	<b>Very, very slight (just noticeable)</b>
1	<b>Very slight</b>
2	<b>Slight</b>
3	<b>Moderate</b>
4	<b>Somewhat severe</b>
5	<b>Severe</b>
6	
7	<b>Very severe</b>
8	
9	<b>Very, very severe</b>
10	<b>Maximal</b>

During **strengthening activity**, your muscles work hard for a short time. The muscles you are working should feel they're working somewhat hard.

## The talk test

During aerobic activity, a quick way to check if you're working at the right level for you is to say out loud:

**'This activity is doing me good!'**

- If you can say the sentence with two or three stops for breath, you're working at a moderate intensity. This is your aim.
- If you can say it without stopping, increase the intensity.
- If you can't speak, or can't say more than one word at a time, slow down.

# How do I keep active during a flare-up?

When you have a chest infection or a flare-up of your symptoms, you might not feel well enough to exercise as usual. But try to keep as active as you can - doing any activity is better than nothing. The sooner you're able to exercise again, the better you'll be able to maintain your fitness.

- You'll need to have some rest when you have a flare-up, but try to stay as active as you can. For example:
  - ▶ Get up and walk around for a few minutes every hour.
  - ▶ If you are sitting in a chair, do some warm-up exercises.
  - ▶ Try a few sit-to-stand exercises throughout the day.
  - ▶ Do some knee extensions.
- As soon as you feel up to it, it is safe to exercise again, even if you're still taking your medicine for your flare-up. You may need to return to an easier level of activity and build up gradually.
- If you go to an exercise or pulmonary rehabilitation group, talk to your trainer about when it would be best for you to return to the class.
- Think 'little and often'. Exercising for a short time, but more often, may be easier.
- If you've been unwell for a while, it may take you some time to get your fitness levels back, but don't be disheartened. Build up gradually and set yourself new goals. Soon you will be able to do as much as you could before.

# What equipment do I need?

You can do all these exercises at home. You'll need:

- a stable, high-backed chair, such as a dining room chair
- some arm weights (see below for how to make weights at home)
- a clear section of wall or a closed door
- a clock or watch
- a clear area in which to exercise – for example, remove rugs to make sure you don't trip

Make your own weights by filling plastic milk or juice containers with water. A 1-litre container filled with water will weigh 1 kilogram, a 2-litre container will weigh 2kg, and so on. Use containers with a built-in handle.

If you need heavier weights, you can fill them with sand or gravel. Weigh them on your kitchen or bathroom scales to get the correct weight.

Or you could use resistance bands, or hand and ankle weights, if you have them.