



# Exercising with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)

## Every move counts

Move more and reduce your sedentary time each day by incorporating different types of movement. It is never too late to start, some is always better than none!

## How to get started

Regular exercise improves your heart and lung health, increases your energy levels so you can do more activities without becoming tired or short of breath, and improves your breathing patterns. It also helps with maintaining a healthy body weight and reducing anxiety, depression and sleep problems. Increasing daily exercise significantly reduces your risk of heart disease, some cancers, hypertension, stroke, type 2 diabetes and obesity. Getting out of breath can be very frightening, which in turn can make breathlessness worse. In trying to avoid this, people often reduce the amount of activity they do. However, this does not help because over time you will become unfit, tired and more breathless.

Although exercise won't reverse your lung disease, it's an effective way to improve your everyday quality of life. Regular exercise enables you to enjoy the activities of daily living such as housework and gardening and enjoy quality leisure time with family and friends.

Discuss with your doctor, healthcare provider or pulmonary rehabilitation team on how you can exercise safely and maximize the benefits of regular exercise. You may need to use oxygen therapy as prescribed and a special breathing technique to assist with your breathing during and after an exercise session.

**Take all medicines as recommended by your doctor or pharmacist. Ensure you have your 'bronchodilator' medicine with you during exercise and use as prescribed by your doctor.**

## Warm up and cool down

**Always start your exercise session with a 10–15-minute warm up to loosen up the muscles and raise the heart rate safely.** Warm-up exercises include dynamic stretches, range-of-motion activities and low intensity movements. This can be done standing up, walking around, marching on the spot or seated.

**Always end your exercise session with a 10–15-minute cool-down to ensure your heart rate and breathing rate return to normal safely.** Cool down exercises include slowly decreasing the intensity of your activity and simple stretches.

## Be active

### Some is good, more is better

<b>How much:</b>	Aim for at least <b>150 – 300</b> minutes a week of moderate intensity or at least <b>75–150</b> minutes a week of vigorous intensity physical activity. Start moving more each day increasing to regular movement every day and add sessions as your strength and stamina improve.
------------------	---

<b>How hard:</b>	Any movement helps. Start with low intensity and aim for moderate to vigorous intensity—aim to get slightly breathless. Take frequent breaks, if necessary. Increase the intensity when you are comfortable (high intensity exercise gives the greatest health improvement).
<b>How long:</b>	Aim to spread out your session throughout the week. If your fitness level is low, start with 5–10-minute sessions and add 10-minute intervals until you can comfortably exercise for longer. Specific breathing exercises, such as pursed lip breathing, can help (ask your doctor/ pulmonary rehabilitation team for more information). Modify your exercise plan in response to your symptoms so that you gain the maximum health benefits.
<b>What type:</b>	All physical activity counts. Try activities within your abilities: walking, cycling, jogging, dancing, swimming, water aerobics, hiking—choose something you enjoy! Recreational team sports such as soccer, tennis, or volleyball are great social activities too! Household activities such as cleaning, gardening, vacuuming or walking your dog are great activities for your health.

### What will it do for me?

*Exercise strengthens the heart and lungs and improves the body's ability to use oxygen. Over time, it can improve your breathing and help improve your immune system to fight off infections, which is important in managing your symptoms.*

## Build strength

<b>How much:</b>	At least twice a week.
<b>How hard:</b>	Start with light muscle strengthening exercises and progress to moderate or greater intensities over time.
<b>How long:</b>	Choose 8–10 exercises targeting the upper and lower body and repeat each exercise 10–15 times. Try 1–3 sets of each exercise. Rest in between sets.
<b>What type:</b>	A variety of strength exercises using free weights, resistance machines or household items such as a can of beans or a weighted water bottle as a weight. At home, try squats, calf raises, wall push-ups, arm curls, knee curls front arm raises, side arm raise, or chair stands .

### What will it do for me?

*For people with COPD, strength exercises that work the upper body are especially helpful, since they strengthen breathing muscles too. Improving muscle strength also helps to conserve bone mass in your legs, improve confidence and mobility, and reduce falls and fracture risk by improving balance and coordination.*



# Exercising with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)

## Improve balance

<b>How much:</b>	At least three days a week.
<b>How hard:</b>	Try 2–3 balance exercises and repeat each exercise 10-15 times.
<b>How long:</b>	Hold each balance for 10-30 seconds.
<b>What type:</b>	Try yoga, Tai Chi, or simple home balance exercises. Balance exercise can be done standing up, using a chair, against a wall or sitting down. Ensure the area you are exercising in and the type of balance exercise is safe. If you are at high risk of falling, do seated balance exercises or exercise using a sturdy chair or wall for support.

### What will it do for me?

*Practising balance exercises helps to train your body to react more quickly to a loss of balance and can help reduce the risk of falls, fractures and injuries.*

## Sedentary living

**Reduce the amount of time being sedentary.** Move more and break up sedentary time. Sedentary behavior is defined as time spent sitting or lying with low energy expenditure, while awake in the context of occupational, educational, home and community settings, and travel. Higher amounts of sedentary behavior can increase the risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers.

**Replace sedentary behavior with more physical activity of any intensity (including light intensity).** It is possible to avoid sedentary behaviour and be physically active while sitting or lying, through, for example, upper body led activities, inclusive and/or wheelchair-specific sport and activities. Try seated stretches for those with limited mobility; using active forms of transport; standing while working (within your abilities and environment), and other accessible active options to replace sedentary time.

## Helpful Resources

To connect with your local lung rehabilitation program, get in contact with the Canadian Lung Association- Call toll-free: 1-888-566-LUNG (5864) or email [info@lung.ca](mailto:info@lung.ca)

To learn more about COPD, treatment options and how to avoid flare ups visit the The Canadian Lung Association's COPD Handbook. [https://www.lung.ca/sites/default/files/LungAssociation\\_COPDHandbook\\_ENFINAL\\_o.pdf](https://www.lung.ca/sites/default/files/LungAssociation_COPDHandbook_ENFINAL_o.pdf)

The Canadian Lung Association provides tips for a successful exercise plan and sample exercises for individuals living with COPD. <https://www.lung.ca/sites/default/files/PhysicalActivity.pdf>

## Your exercise, your way!

Choose activities that are easy to start with, and that you enjoy. Always exercise within your abilities. If mobility is difficult, adapted cycling, swimming and chair-based exercises may be better alternatives. Exercise with friends and family or join a group class. Try exercising both indoors and outdoors and see which you prefer. Most importantly: **some physical activity is better than none.**

## Exercise safety

**Avoid exercising when the temperature is excessively hot or cold and schedule exercise for mid or late morning when your breathing should be easier.**

**Avoid exercising outdoors if pollution levels are high. If possible, plan to exercise indoors on those days.**

Start with shorter sessions (e.g. 10–15 minutes) and slowly build up to the recommended level.

Aim to get slightly out of breath, but exercise sensibly and stop the activity if you feel unwell.

Always wear comfortable clothing and shoes that give good support. Take frequent breaks if necessary, and drink water before, during and after exercise.

Always ensure that you exercise safely during all exercises and ask for support from your doctor, healthcare provider or pulmonary rehabilitation team if you are unsure about any exercises.

Choose environments that you can access freely and safely. Please ask your healthcare provider or local leisure organizations for advice on the best option for you.

Scan for more physical activity resources!

