



Respiratory Services – keeping well



Version 1: April 2022

The contents of this information has been reviewed and approved by the Clinical Governance Committee of Bedfordshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust



Introduction

It's imperative to do everything you can to keep healthy whilst while you are managing your respiratory condition. If you have any specific concerns about your treatment, you are advised to contact the Respiratory Team for support. Below are a few things to keep in mind while you wait.

Take your medication

If you have been prescribed medication from the Respiratory Department or your GP surgery, make sure you take these as advised. Stopping this could lead to your health deteriorating. If any doubt regarding the effects of the medication, please seek advice from your GP practice. Please also ensure you are well aware of the process in ordering repeat prescriptions.

If you have been issued with a 'rescue pack' of oral steroids and /or antibiotics, and instructions on your health plans as to when to start these, please do so and let your health professional know.

The Respiratory Department also have an acute respiratory assessment service (ARAS). If you are known to have chronic lung disease such as COPD, Chronic Asthma, Bronchiectasis, Interstitial lung disease and you feel like you're having a flare up of your lung condition with no relief from your rescue medication such as steroids or antibiotics, please contact your GP or health professional in the community. Alternatively, this can be used as a self-referral service by calling **07535 977268**. One of the respiratory nurses will discuss your symptoms with you and you will be advised appropriately.

Healthy living

It's normal to feel anxious about your health condition, keeping yourself healthy can help you recover more quickly if you have a flare-up. People who are able to improve their health and activity levels are known to recover more quickly. We all have parts of our lives that we would like to change, from stopping smoking to achieving and maintaining a healthier weight. The good news is that, as well as improving your health in the long term, making those changes can reduce your risk of a range of complications and can also help you recover more quickly from any flare-up or hospitalisation.

Managing pain

You may be in pain or discomfort while you are waiting for an appointment or treatment. We know that some people will be in pain while they are waiting for an appointment or treatment. Pain can have a huge impact on our lives; from how we move, to our mood and sleep. Frustratingly pain can affect what matters most to us in life; from our relationships with family and friends, to our ability to work or take part in hobbies. Everyone's pain experience is different, and everyone has different goals they would like to work towards.

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Having better knowledge around your condition can help you increase your confidence when making decisions around what to change and how to take control back of your life.

Improve your health

Alcohol

Alcohol can have many effects on the body, but importantly it can reduce the liver's ability to produce the building blocks necessary for healing. Make sure you are drinking within the recommended limits, or lower, to improve your body's ability to heal. It is important to make sure any known conditions are controlled as well as possible ahead of your surgery. You can also book in for a general health check at your GP surgery if you are between 40 and 74 years old.

Smoking

Stopping smoking is hard, but the good news is that quitting or cutting down can improve your lung function; improve your overall oxygenation and blood pressure and reduce the length of any stay in hospital. There are many ways in which to quit cigarette smoking. Your local stop smoking service can also support you in quitting.

Blood pressure

Blood pressure should be controlled to safe levels to reduce your risk of stroke and other complications. Have your blood pressure checked at your surgery at regular intervals – some GP surgeries have automated machines so you can pop in any time. If it is high, your GP can check your medications and make any changes needed.

Diabetes

Good control of your blood sugar is really important to reduce your risk of infections. Think about your diet and weight. Talk to your diabetes nurse or team early to see if they need to make any changes to your treatment.

Weight

If you are overweight, losing weight can help reduce the stress on your heart and lungs. In addition, it can help to:

- lower your blood pressure
- improve your blood sugar level
- reduce pain in your joints
- reduce your risk of blood clots
- reduce your risk of infections
- allow you to exercise more easily.

Anaemia (low blood count)

If you have been bleeding or have any other chronic medical conditions, a blood test can check whether you are anaemic. If you are, you should talk to your GP about treatment to

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improve your blood count. Anaemia can also contribute to you becoming more breathless.

Other long-term medical problems

If you have any other long-term medical problems, consider asking your GP or nurse for a review of your medications, especially if you think your health is not as good as it could be.

Dental health

If you have loose teeth or crowns, a visit to the dentist may reduce the risk of damage to your teeth during an operation.

Keep moving

Regular exercise is part of a healthy lifestyle, even if you have chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). You might feel like it is not safe, or even possible to exercise, but the right amount and type of exercise has many benefits. Be sure to ask your doctor before you start or make changes to your exercise routine.

Brisk walking, swimming, cycling, gardening, or playing with your children are all helpful. Try to do any activity which makes you feel out of breath at least three times per week, but always check with your doctor first what type of exercise is most appropriate for you. Activities that improve your strength and balance will also be useful to you.

Pulmonary rehabilitation

Pulmonary Rehabilitation has been shown to improve the lives of patients with long term respiratory conditions and help manage breathlessness as well as improvements in their overall quality of life. This includes exercise tolerance.

The Pulmonary Rehabilitation programme provides you with the tools needed to manage and sustain your lung condition. This is a twice weekly, 7-week programme of exercise and education carried out by specialists including respiratory physiotherapy, respiratory clinical nurse specialists and exercise specialists. Your GP or healthcare professional can refer you if they feel this is appropriate for you. Please discuss this with them.

More information about keeping well and managing better lung health at:

- www.nhs.uk/betterhealth
- www.blf.org.uk
- www.asthma.org.uk
- www.thestopsmokingservice.co.uk

Good mental health

People sometimes feel worried or anxious before a hospital appointment or treatment. This is perfectly normal. Some people might also find that an existing mental health condition gets worse. You can find helpful links for mental health support on the NHS website:

www.nhs.uk/mental-health/

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Mental health charity Mind also has webpages about COVID-19 and your wellbeing: www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing

Talking therapies, or psychological therapies, are effective and confidential treatments delivered by fully trained and accredited NHS practitioners. They can help with common mental health problems like stress, anxiety and depression.

Bedfordshire wellbeing Service - www.elft.nhs.uk

Money worries

Having acute and chronic lung conditions could affect how many hours you are able to work, and how much you are earning. If you are struggling to pay bills, need help with a benefits issue, or are concerned about growing debt, there is free, confidential support and advice available.

- Benefit Calculator - Turn2Us (<https://benefits-calculator.turn2us.org.uk>)
- Free Debt Advice - Step change (https://www.stepchange.org/?channel=ppc&gclid=Cj0KCQiA5OuNBhCRARIsACgaiqWqrypLLKfryDhpGNnl_SVXX2po9jQKylEb_rgGoa8ivlqMqiAdHBQaAomdEALw_wcB)
- NHS - Low income Scheme (<https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-low-income-scheme>)
- Access to Work - Employment support programme that aims to help more disabled people start or stay in work (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-work-factsheet/access-to-work-factsheet-for-customers>)

Your local Citizens Advice can help you find a way forward, whatever the problem. They offer confidential information and advice to assist people with legal, debt, consumer, housing, and other problems. Contact your local Citizens Advice (<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>) office for more information and access to online support.

COVID-19 vaccination

If you are eligible for a COVID-19 vaccination, it is recommended that you have this prior to attending hospital appointments or surgery. To find out if you are eligible, [visit the NHS COVID-19 vaccination pages](#). If you are eligible and would [like to book your vaccination appointment, visit the national booking service](#).