

Physical activity and your lungs

Any type of exercise or activity that requires your muscles to work counts as physical activity. It could be a hobby you enjoy or something you are competitive at. This could be anything from running or cycling to football or tennis; from bowls or golf to ice skating or surfing, and anything in between. It could also include physical activities which are part of your daily life, such as gardening or cleaning. Even parking further from the shops and walking the rest of the way is a positive step towards more physical activity.



Any extra activity helps to improve your health. The recommended levels of activity are:



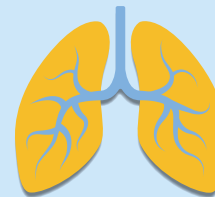
**2 hours and
30 minutes
a week**

That is 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week

Each bit of exercise can be just 10 minutes long

You should be out of breath, but still be able to speak

Exercise can improve how well your lungs work.



Tailored exercise such as pulmonary rehabilitation can help you to feel better or manage your lung condition if you have one.



Exercise will improve your overall physical and psychological well-being. It can reduce the risk of developing other conditions such as stroke, heart disease, depression and type 2 diabetes.



HEALTHY LUNGS FOR LIFE

Top tips

Warm up, cool down

Start slow and warm-up with gentle movement. This gets your body ready to move.

At the end of your work-out, slow down your activities, stretch the muscles you have used and allow your breathing to return to normal.



Make it fun

Do what you enjoy, at your own pace. You can gradually increase the intensity when you feel ready. Do not be afraid to get a little out of breath. It will get easier as you get used to it.

If you make it fun, you are more likely to be consistent and make activity part of your routine.

Stretch

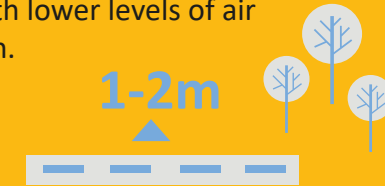
Gentle stretching can improve flexibility. This is important to help you carry out daily activities and reduce aches and pains. Stretching is also a good tool for mindfulness which can help with your mental wellbeing.



Avoid the road

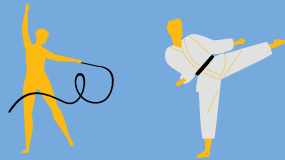
If you are exercising outdoors, stay away from roads to avoid air pollution. But remember levels of air pollution reduce even just 1–2 meters away from traffic.

When exercising in a town or city, use parks, public spaces and trails with lower levels of air pollution.



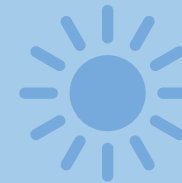
Try something different

A lot of us think we do not like exercise, especially if you don't like running, going to the gym or team sports. But there is something for everyone! Try something different, maybe a dance class, karate or even circus training. You could explore your city on an electric bike or scooter. There are infinite options so don't limit yourself to something you do not enjoy.



Check the weather

Air pollution tends to be higher on hot, sunny days, while the air tends to be cleaner after rainy or windy weather. Follow public health advice on hot days or days with a lot of air pollution. These may be the rare days to avoid intense activities if you have a lung condition.



Balance

It is important to keep our ability to balance – think single-leg movements or balancing activities such as yoga, skiing or climbing. This helps prevent falls as we age.



Stay strong

Building muscle is especially important for people with lung conditions, women and older people. We can build muscle by doing exercises such as lifting weights or bodyweight exercises.



Move often

Avoid spending a long time sitting or lying down, for example when watching television or working at a desk. If you do so, stand up at least every 30 minutes.

This document was produced with the aim of teaching the public about physical activity to maintain healthy lungs and to help healthcare professionals explain the benefits of healthy lungs. It was produced by the European Lung Foundation (ELF) as part of the Healthy Lungs for Life campaign, with the support of patient Kjeld Hansen and healthcare professionals Frits Franssen, Thierry Troosters and Karl Sylvester.

