



What is pulmonary rehabilitation?

Pulmonary rehabilitation is a comprehensive program for people living with chronic lung disease who have symptoms of breathlessness and often have a decreased ability to perform the activities of daily life. Programs are individually tailored and designed to optimise physical and social wellbeing. The structure and delivery of each program is different and depends upon local resources.

What are the aims?

The aims of pulmonary rehabilitation are to:

- Encourage physical fitness
- Improve quality of life
- Increase participant's ability to cope with the acute and chronic phases of chronic lung disease
- Reduce hospital admissions and length of stay on hospital

Who attends pulmonary rehabilitation?

In general, pulmonary rehabilitation programs are suitable for people who have chronic lung disease and who are limited by breathlessness. Partners or caregivers are also encouraged to attend.

What does the program consist of?

The program consists of an individual assessment followed by exercise training and education. Normally you will attend twice a week for about 8 weeks. At the end of the program, there is normally a re-assessment and by this point, there will be an agreed plan in place of how you will be able to maintain the benefits gained during the program.

I find exercise really hard, why will doing more help me?

Exercise is something many people with chronic lung disease find really difficult and often, people who are short of breath find activity harder and harder to do over time. Exercise training is an essential part of the program, helping to reverse this "cycle of inactivity". Clinical trials have consistently shown that an improvement in exercise tolerance is one of the main benefits following completion of pulmonary rehabilitation.

What's involved in the exercise?

Your exercise program will be prescribed based on your results from the initial assessment and your goals. The physiotherapist will recommend the type, intensity, length, frequency and type of exercise you should do. Normally each exercise session will consist of a warm-up followed by some aerobic exercise, some strengthening exercises for your arms and legs and a cool down.

The aerobic exercise may include some walking, cycling or stepping. Walking is a really important element, as many aspects of daily life involve walking. Your exercise may be continuous or in an interval format. Intervals mean that you will stop and rest to recover during the exercise.

Over the weeks, your exercises will be progressed as you get stronger. You will not do anything that you are not comfortable with. Most participants are surprised and pleased at how

much more they are able to do over the weeks. Once you are confident to exercise you will be given a home exercise program to do on other days of the week.

What topics are there in addition to exercise?

The education component of each pulmonary rehabilitation program is different; some of the topics may include:

1. Medications used to treat chronic lung disease
2. Breathing techniques/ managing breathlessness
3. Sputum clearance
4. Benefits of physical exercise
5. Oxygen therapy
6. Energy conservation techniques
7. Nutrition/ healthy eating
8. Information on how the lungs work
9. Coping with chronic lung disease and management of depression, anxiety and panic attacks

What are the expected benefits?

Following pulmonary rehabilitation, most people feel they are able to do more and feel less breathless.

Some of the benefits of pulmonary rehabilitation include:

- Increased exercise tolerance and improved physical function
- Reduced breathlessness
- Improved quality of life
- Improved mood and motivation
- Improved knowledge of condition and management
- Increased participation in everyday activities

What about oxygen?

All pulmonary rehabilitation programs will have oxygen available for exercise. During the assessment, it will be decided if you will need to wear oxygen during the exercise. This will be discussed and explained in detail at that time.

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Will it be safe for me to attend?

Yes. Pulmonary rehabilitation is very safe.

What happens when I've finished Pulmonary Rehabilitation?

At the completion of Pulmonary Rehabilitation you will be encouraged to continue exercising at home, as the evidence shows that the benefits you have gained are often lost within 6-12 months if your exercise isn't maintained. If you find it difficult to motivate yourself or would enjoy some company as you exercise, you may prefer to join a suitable group exercise program. Lungs in Action is Lung Foundation Australia's community based exercise maintenance program that is for people with stable chronic lung conditions who have completed Pulmonary Rehabilitation. These safe and social classes are run by specially trained instructors and take place in venues such as community halls, RSL clubs and gyms.

How do I find my local program?

Contact: Lung Foundation Australia on 1800 654 301 to find a program close to you.

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Please consult your family doctor or specialist respiratory physician if you have further questions relating to the information contained in this leaflet. For details of patient support groups in Australia please call 1800 654 301.