

Pulmonary Rehabilitation



**Lung
Foundation
Australia**

when you can't breathe... nothing else matters®

What is pulmonary rehabilitation?

Pulmonary rehabilitation is an exercise and education program provided by specially trained health professionals. It teaches you the skills you need to exercise safely and to manage your breathlessness.

Who can attend pulmonary rehabilitation?

Pulmonary rehabilitation programs are suitable for people with chronic lung disease. Family members or caregivers are also encouraged to attend the education sessions that may be offered in some pulmonary rehabilitation programs.

What are the benefits?

Research shows that pulmonary rehabilitation is one of the best things you can do to improve your breathing and wellbeing. It also reduces the frequency of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) exacerbations (flare-ups) and helps you stay well and out of hospital.

An improvement in exercise tolerance is one of the main benefits of completing a pulmonary rehabilitation program. This will make normal daily activities such as showering, hanging out the washing, walking or gardening easier. You may also find you don't need as much help to do the things you enjoy.



What does it involve?

Usually pulmonary rehabilitation programs run for 6 - 8 weeks, with two exercise sessions per week. Before you start exercising, a health professional will talk to you about your condition and will ask you to do some different exercise tasks. They will then design an exercise program suited to your needs and symptoms. Once you are confident to exercise on your own you will be given a home exercise program to do on days of the week when you are not at pulmonary rehabilitation. Some pulmonary rehabilitation programs also offer information sessions to help you self-manage your condition.

What topics are in the information sessions?

The content of the information sessions can differ from program to program however common topics include:

- How your lungs work
- Medicines - what they do and how to use them
- Exercise and how it can improve your symptoms
- Nutrition and living well with your condition
- Managing depression and anxiety
- Energy conservation and airway clearance techniques
- Managing breathlessness
- Oxygen therapy.

Is pulmonary rehabilitation safe?

Yes, pulmonary rehabilitation is very safe. Once you have medical clearance to exercise, the initial assessment and individualised exercise program you receive at pulmonary rehabilitation ensures you are exercising at a level that is safe for you. All exercises are tailored to suit each individual and their specific needs to ensure you feel comfortable in completing the exercises.

I feel too breathless to exercise. Will pulmonary rehabilitation help me?

If you get breathless during physical activity you may start to avoid exercise. However this can cause your muscles to become weak and you'll lose fitness over time. Pulmonary rehabilitation aims to reverse the cycle of inactivity and breathlessness. Most people say after completing pulmonary rehabilitation that they are able to do more in their daily life and feel less out of breath when completing tasks. You may also be able to return to activities you had previously given up.



Pulmonary rehabilitation made such a difference for me that my doctor took me off the waiting list for lung reduction surgery, and I am now back at work two days a week.

- John, lives with COPD



What happens when I've finished pulmonary rehabilitation?

After you finish pulmonary rehabilitation, it is important to continue exercising to help maintain your physical fitness and lung health. Lung Foundation Australia's Lungs in Action program is a safe and fun community-based exercise class designed to help people with a chronic lung disease maintain the benefits achieved through pulmonary rehabilitation. It is also suitable for people with heart failure who often experience similar symptoms, such as breathlessness, to those with chronic lung conditions.



How do I join a pulmonary rehabilitation program?

Each pulmonary rehabilitation program has their own referral and eligibility criteria. Lung Foundation Australia has a database of all known programs in Australia and can help you find a program close to you.



FURTHER INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

Contact Lung Foundation Australia for more information and to access our support services. You can also join our mailing list for regular updates and the latest news.

Lung Foundation Australia Services

- Information and Support Line
- Lung disease information resources
- Education seminars and webinars
- Lung Cancer Support Nurse
- Support groups
- Peer-to-peer connections
- Referral to pulmonary rehabilitation and Lungs in Action exercise programs
- Newsletter

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