

Community support services

This chapter will help you to understand:

- How you can use community support services.
- Where you can seek or access community support services.
- What a patient support group is.
- What your transport options are.
- What other community support services may be helpful.

How can you use community support services?

- Be an active participant in your care.
- Learn about your lung condition and learn how to manage and adapt to it.
- Benefit from the knowledge and experience of other people who have lung conditions.
- Build your own support network to help manage your health.
- Plan ahead and use available services as you need them.

Where can you seek or access community support services?

1. From your team of **health care professionals**, which may include:
 - A local doctor or respiratory physician.
 - A community pharmacist.
 - A community health centre.
 - Your local council.
 - A nurse, such as a community health or respiratory nurse.
 - Allied health care professionals, such as a physiotherapist, dietician, social worker, psychologist, occupational therapist or speech pathologist.
2. From **Lung Foundation Australia** (phone: 1800 654 301 or website: www.lungfoundation.com.au), which may include:
 - Patient information resources.
 - Information on local pulmonary rehabilitation programs, patient support groups and community exercise programs (maintenance).
3. From your local **Commonwealth Carelink Centre** (phone: 1800 052 222), which provides free information about local community aged care, disability and support services.
4. From the **Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre** (phone: 1800 059 059), which provides information and options about respite care and other support services for carers, such as:
 - Respite care in emergency and short term planned care situations.
 - Assistance in locating and booking residential respite.
 - Access to an emergency respite service 24 hours a day.



What is a patient support group?

A patient support group is a group of people who have common interests and needs. Lung Foundation Australia supports a network of support groups for people who have lung conditions, and their carers and family.

What do patient support groups do?

When you join a patient support group, you can expect to benefit from a range of possible activities from social support to special seminars to online support chat rooms.

How you can benefit from a patient support group

Joining a patient support group allows you to:

Discuss the information you have learnt from your doctor and other health care professionals, as sometimes the information is difficult to remember or confusing.

- Access new information on your lung condition.
- Share your experiences in a caring environment.
- Participate in pleasurable social activities.
- Change the way you think about your condition.
- Help your carer to understand your condition.

Have you ever experienced the satisfaction of helping someone else in distress? Sometimes,

focusing our energy on helping others is the best therapy for overcoming our own troubled feelings.

There are people who need your support and friendship.

Who will attend the patient support group?

You will meet ordinary people, from all different working and ethnic backgrounds. They will share with you a common personal interest in managing their lung condition, whether they are a patient or a carer.

Group members will also have a wide variety of social and lifestyle interests.

Where and when do patient support groups meet?

Most groups have regular meetings that are held at a community or neighbourhood centre, or a meeting room at a local hospital. Venues with reasonable transport access are normally chosen.

How much does participating in a patient support group cost?

Membership of a patient support group normally involves a small annual fee and perhaps a gold coin at meetings to cover the costs of membership services, such as postage, photocopying and meetings. These fees are always kept to an absolute minimum.

How do you join a patient support group?

Lung Foundation Australia operates an Australia-wide network of affiliated patient support groups.

To find out about patient support groups in your area, contact Lung Foundation Australia (phone: 1800 654 301, or website: www.lungfoundation.com.au).

What are your transport options?

Options for transport will depend on what transport is available in your local area. Your local council and community health centre will be able to provide details of the transportation services within your community.

Options may include:

- Disability parking permits (for more information, see your GP or occupational therapist).
- A taxi subsidy scheme with reduced taxi fares (for more information, see your GP).
- An ambulance service at reduced cost for transport to and from medical appointments (for more information, talk with your local ambulance service).
- A Home and Community Care Program (for more information, talk with your local community health centre).
- A Patient Transit Scheme that provides financial help for travel and accommodation expenses for people from rural, regional and remote areas in some parts of Australia when travelling to the closest specialist treatment centre. Patients should make arrangements with a means test clerk, social worker or welfare officer at their local hospital before travelling.

What other community support services may be helpful?

1. The **Department of Veterans' Affairs** can provide financial, medical, transport and homecare assistance for those people who have served in the armed services. The assistance available includes the following options:
 - Gold Card. Veterans who have served for their country and who are deemed suitable



for this benefit are eligible for a full range of health care services.

- White Card. Veterans who have served their country are eligible for compensation related to their service in the forces. Australian veterans are eligible for Veterans' Home Care; however, British or other overseas veterans are not eligible for Veterans' Home Care.
- Orange Card. Eligible veterans can access the range of pharmaceutical items available under the Repatriation Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

For more information contact Veterans' Home Care (phone: 1300 550 450).

2. The **Home and Community Care Program** provides government funding for the frail aged and young disabled people, and includes the following services:
 - Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme.
 - Meals on Wheels.
 - Community Agencies (for example, Queensland Health Primary and Community Health Services, Blue Care™, Spiritus and Ozcare).
 - Palliative Care Services.
 - Home Assist Secure (Queensland Government Department of Housing).

- Aged Care Assessment Service.
 - Community Aged Care Packages.
 - Day or Respite Care.
3. The **National Smoking Quitline** (phone: 137 848) provides assistance if you wish to quit smoking.
4. **Will preparation do it yourself kits** are available for purchase if you wish to prepare a will. Alternatively, speak to a solicitor or a Public Trustee in your state.
5. **Counselling and information services**, such as:
- Lifeline (phone: 131 114)
 - Centacare (located in your capital city)
 - Suicide Call Back Service (phone: 1300 659 467)
 - Beyond Blue Info Line (phone: 1300 224 636)
 - The Shed OnLine (www.theshedonline.org.au)
 - Carer's Australia (phone: 1800 242 636)
 - Asthma Foundation Australia (phone: 1800 645 130).
6. **Financial support services** such as Centrelink Financial Services 13 23 00; Financial Counselling Service 1800 007 007.
7. **Legal and advocacy support services** contact the Legal Aid Service and Public Trustee Office within your State or Territory.
8. **Relationship support services** Relationships Australia 1300 364 277 and Mensline 1300 789 978.
9. **Accommodation support services** contact the Department of Housing within your State or Territory for information and referral to appropriate agencies including Homelessness Information Services. If your issues are related to a private rental property you may wish to contact your local Tenant Advice and Advocacy Service – refer to your local phone directory for your nearest service contact details.

