



# Pulmonary rehabilitation

## What is pulmonary rehabilitation?

Pulmonary rehabilitation is an exercise and education program delivered by a team of health professionals, such as physiotherapists, exercise physiologists and nurses. It teaches you the skills to exercise safely and manage the symptoms of your condition, such as breathlessness.

## Who can attend pulmonary rehabilitation?

Pulmonary rehabilitation programs are suitable for people living with chronic lung disease or lung cancer. Your healthcare professional can help you determine if you are eligible and if pulmonary rehabilitation is right for you.

## What are the benefits?

Pulmonary rehabilitation is one of the best things you can do to improve your breathing, wellbeing and reduce the symptoms of your condition. An improvement in exercise tolerance is one of the main benefits of completing a pulmonary rehabilitation program. This is likely to make normal daily activities such as walking, gardening, hanging out the washing or showering easier.

## What does it involve and is it safe?

Pulmonary rehabilitation programs usually run for six to eight weeks, with two exercise sessions per week. One session per week is likely to involve an education session. Each pulmonary rehabilitation program is different, and may be held in a hospital, community centre, at home or online using a computer, smartphone or tablet (called telerehabilitation).

Before starting, a health professional will assess your condition and exercise ability to ensure the individualised program is safe for you. Once you feel confident, you'll receive a home program to follow between pulmonary rehabilitation sessions.

## What topics are in the education sessions?

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



How your lungs work and lung disease



Managing stress, depression, and anxiety



Medications, including how they work, side effects and technique



Energy conservation



Self-management skills



Airway clearance techniques



Exercise, physical activity and how it can improve your symptoms



Oxygen therapy



Managing breathlessness



Continence



Nutrition and healthy eating



Intimacy

## 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 are likely to lose fitness over time. Pulmonary rehabilitation aims to reverse the cycle of inactivity and breathlessness. After completing pulmonary rehabilitation, people say they can do more in their daily life and feel less breathless when completing tasks.

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*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**

## How do I join a pulmonary rehabilitation program?

Each pulmonary rehabilitation program has their own referral and eligibility criteria. Talk to your health professional about a referral to pulmonary rehabilitation.

Lung Foundation Australia has a database of all known programs in Australia and can help you find a program close to you.

Visit [lungfoundation.com.au/services/](http://lungfoundation.com.au/services/)

## What happens when I've finished pulmonary rehabilitation?

After you finish pulmonary rehabilitation, it is important to continue exercising to maintain your physical fitness and lung health. You may wish to attend a supervised ongoing exercise program at a health facility, community or hospital outpatient setting, if available. Alternatively, you can speak to your GP about seeing an exercise professional, such as a Respiratory Physiotherapist or Exercise Physiologist, to support you with an individualised exercise program.

**Find out more about exercising with a lung condition**



## FURTHER INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

### Lung Foundation Australia Services

- Lung Health Helpline
- Lung Cancer Support Nurse
- Lung health and disease information resources
- Education seminars and webinars
- Support groups
- Peer-to-peer connections
- Information about accessing pulmonary rehabilitation
- Newsletter

**Lungfoundation.com.au | Lung Health Helpline 1800 654 301 | [enquiries@lungfoundation.com.au](mailto:enquiries@lungfoundation.com.au)**

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