

Coping with Chronic Respiratory Diseases

Chronic respiratory diseases (CRDs) are diseases of the airway and other structures of the lung

Types of CRDs:

- ★ Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)
- ★ Bronchiectasis
- ★ Asthma
- ★ Interstitial Lung Disease (includes pulmonary fibrosis)

Causes of respiratory disease:

- Smoking (90% of all COPD cases)
- Exposure to chemicals and dust/small particles eg. asbestos, aerosols
- Environmental exposure eg. pollution
- Alpha 1 antitrypsin deficiency (rare genetic condition)



How are CRDs diagnosed?

- Detailed clinical history
- Spirometry (important to get this done every year)
- Chest X-Ray, MRI, CT scan

Common symptoms of CRDs

- Cough (dry or productive)
- Phlegm
- Wheeze
- Shortness of breath
- Hyperventilation
- Fatigue

These symptoms can result in secondary problems, such as:

- Low mood and depression
- Anxiety
- Challenging activities of daily living
- Loss of libido
- Changes in weight (weight loss or weight gain)

What can 'The Breathe Programme' help with?

- Support with and/or refer to smoking cessation service
 - ★ *Stopping smoking is the most important thing you can do and the most effective way of slowing further lung damage*
- Tailored and flexible exercise programme to improve your fitness so to feel more confident doing activities of daily living
- Self-management of signs and symptoms

- Better understanding of your disease
- What to do if you are unwell
- Learn breathing exercises to clear phlegm
- Help you cope better with shortness of breath
- Medication management and learn about the correct inhaler technique (common cause of inhalers not working effectively)
- Managing stress and anxiety
- Teach about the importance of vaccinations from your GP practice

Signs of a flare up/exacerbation:

- Increase in breathlessness or wheeze
- Increase in phlegm
- Change in phlegm colour

**Any 2 of these symptoms-
TAKE ACTION**

- Increase in fatigue/tiredness
- Loss of appetite
- Reduced sleep



Dealing with an exacerbation of your CRD:

- ✓ Increase use of your blue inhaler if you feel you need it
- ✓ Collect a phlegm/sputum sample if possible (your GP practice will have sample pots)
- ✓ Commence rescue pack, if you have one
- ✓ Phone the GP practice

★ GP appointment / phone call from your GP / a prescription ★

You should hear back from your GP practice within 4 hours

You should **ALWAYS** phone your GP even if you have started your rescue pack

What to consider during an exacerbation:

- Allow more time for doing activities
- Increase rest time and use relaxation techniques (See CRD Talk)
- Use controlled breathing exercises, huff and cough to help clear phlegm
- Eat smaller amounts more frequently
- Increase fluid intake

Danger Signs- Call 999

★ If you are so breathless you cannot complete a sentence ★

★ Chest pain ★

★ Confusion or drowsiness ★

For Further information visit: www.thebreatheprogramme.co.uk