

Pulmonary rehabilitation after an exacerbation





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This leaflet gives general information on pulmonary rehabilitation after an exacerbation. It does not replace the need for personal advice from a healthcare professional. Please ask us if you have any questions.

What is an exacerbation?

When the symptoms of your lung condition suddenly become worse, it is called an exacerbation. This is usually treated in hospital as an inpatient or by a change in your medicine (such as steroids or antibiotics).

What is pulmonary rehabilitation (PR)?

Pulmonary rehabilitation (PR) is a set of personalised classes to help you manage your breathlessness and gradually increase your fitness level. Each class consists of an education and exercise session and lasts around 90 minutes. Classes are held face to face and online twice a week for 8 weeks.

Why am I being offered PR now?

When you have an exacerbation, you may find you are less active. Even when you are starting to feel better, you may still find it harder to do your daily activities. Doctors have studied the effect of PR in patients after an exacerbation. They found that starting PR within 2 weeks of leaving hospital can help:

- make it easier to complete daily activities such as walking, climbing stairs or getting dressed
- improve quality of life
- reduce the risk of another exacerbation
- reduce the possibility of needing another hospital stay
- improve survival



What patients say about PR

PR is “making the best of what you have.”

“It helps me on the road to recovery.”

“I said ‘that’s for me’ straight away. I accepted it as I did not want to get worse. I wanted to maintain what I have.”

Is it safe for me?

Your healthcare professional will only recommend PR if it will help you manage your condition and make you feel better. A specialist physiotherapist will check what you can do and make sure it is safe for you to take part.

How do I get referred?

Your doctor, nurse or physiotherapist may recommend PR to you while you are in hospital. Your GP, practice nurses or community matron can also refer you. If you are unsure or would like help being referred, please contact us.

Once you have been referred, we will contact you within 2 weeks. This will be to talk to you about coming in for an assessment.

Please let us know if you have any questions about PR or why you have been referred.

What happens at the assessment?

A specialist physiotherapist will discuss your goals with you and complete a full lung health check-up. You can have the assessment even if your symptoms are worse than usual.

The assessment will include checking:

- how well your lungs work
- how your lung condition affects your walking and daily activities
- your medical history and medicines
- how your lung condition affects you

You can bring a relative, friend or carer with you to all the appointments.

After the assessment, we will offer you a class within 4 weeks if appropriate.

What patients say about the assessment

"I was very nervous about the assessment but once I was there I was alright."

"The physio was great and explained everything. It was good that they spent a lot of time with me. I was feeling so vulnerable after my hospital stay."

What happens during the classes?

At your first class, we will introduce you to other patients with lung conditions. You will exercise with them in group sessions either in person or online. Each class is split into an exercise session and education session.

Exercise

The specialist physiotherapist will design a programme specifically for you, based on your goals and medical history from your assessment. This will include a combination of arm and leg exercises. You will be given the choice of using gym equipment or handheld weights, such as dumbbells.



What patients say about the exercises

"You are not alone. We are all in the same boat."

"I did a bit more than I thought so I was really pleased."

"They tailored it to my needs."

"It really helped me feel stronger."

Education

The education sessions are designed to provide you with the tools for managing your condition. Topics include:

- Information about lung disease
- Airway clearance and breathing techniques
- Inhaler technique
- How to manage a chest infection
- Coping with lung disease
- Relaxation and pacing yourself
- Benefits of exercise and how to exercise at home
- Medicines
- Help on how to stop smoking
- Healthy lifestyle and diet

When and where are the classes?

There is a choice of classes at different times and locations. They include classes at a hospital, gym or community hall, around North West London. Or, online classes you can take part in using a computer, tablet or smartphone. Different patients prefer different environments, so we can discuss the best option for you.

What patients say about the education classes

"I do not panic now when I am short of breath."
"It's great because they spend time explaining things I've always wanted to know."

Getting to the classes

If you do not have your own transport and are unable to use public transport, please ask us for advice.

Contact us

To find out more information phone **01895 828 851** or email to gstt.harefieldpr@nhs.net.

What people say about PR

"You don't know until you have a go."
"My quality of life improved. It does help."
"I'm so glad I did it. It was the best thing for my recovery."

If you have concerns about any aspect of the service you have received in hospital and feel unable to talk to those people responsible for your care, call the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01895 826 572. You can also email gstt.rbhh-pals@nhs.net. This is a confidential service.

Royal Brompton Hospital
Sydney Street
London
SW3 6NP
Phone: 0330 12 88121

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Hill End Road
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Middlesex
UB9 6JH
Phone: 0330 12 88121

Website: www.rbht.nhs.uk

Royal Brompton and Harefield hospitals are part of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust

Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please contact the department your appointment is with.