

Your exercise handbook

Before you start to exercise

Our exercise programme includes a full range of exercises for you to choose from. At first, choose what works best for you and what you find easiest. Then try other exercises too and aim to do a bit more each week. Choose what you enjoy doing. Always remember to warm up before you exercise, and to cool down and stretch afterwards.

If you've already been to pulmonary rehabilitation (PR), or can't get out to an exercise class, using this handbook can be a good way to exercise at home. We hope you'll see an improvement from week to week.

Download the full 'My Exercise Programme' at blf.org.uk/exercise-handbook

You can also watch the exercise programme online at blf.org.uk/exercise-video

Find out more about the benefits of activity and exercise and get ideas about becoming more active at blf.org.uk/keep-active

safety
first

Before you start any exercise, including using our handbook, talk to your health care professional to make sure it's safe.

What activities should I do and when?

To feel better in your mind and body, aim to move more every day. If you haven't exercised for a long time, it is important to start with small increases in activity and gradually build up how much exercise you do.

Any activity is better than none. Over time, you'll get fitter and be able to do more. Different types of exercise have different benefits.

tip **Sit less, move more**
This is one of the biggest changes you can make to get more active. Try to break up long periods of sitting and increase the number of steps you take each day.

Warming up

Before doing any exercise, always remember to warm up first. **Warm-ups** are important to get you ready for exercise and prevent injury.

Types of exercise

There are many different types of exercise you can do. It is important to include some form of aerobic exercise, and some form of strengthening or balancing exercise.

- **Aerobic exercise** gets your heart and lungs working, so you feel somewhat out of breath, a bit warm and sweaty. As you get fitter, the more you will be able to do before getting too breathless. Lots of everyday activities are actually aerobic exercise, like walking briskly, dancing, housework and gardening.
- **Strengthening (or resistance) exercises** help you develop stronger muscles. This is important to stay independent. Have a go at the simple strengthening exercises in the exercise programme. Always stretch after these exercises to avoid any muscle soreness. Try to do some strengthening exercises at least 2 days a week. Most of them also help with balance too, as strength in your 'core' and legs is important for this.
- **Balance and co-ordination exercises** reduce the risk of falls. Activities like dance, tai chi, yoga and bowls are all good for your balance and co-ordination. Many of the strengthening exercises also help to improve your balance. You can also do the balance and co-ordination exercises in the exercise programme. If you have poor balance, we've marked exercises that will help you with a star. Try to do activities to help your balance and co-ordination at least 2 days a week. Some of these can double up as strengthening exercises.

Cool-down exercises

After any form of exercise, you should complete a cool down. **Cool down exercises and stretches** help you recover after exercise.

How hard should I work?

It depends what you're doing! Here's a guide:

For **aerobic** activity you want to feel **moderately** to **somewhat severely** **breathless**. You may feel slightly sweaty and your heart will beat faster too. This is normal. Use this scale to help you to see how hard you need to work – the words and numbers describe how short of breath you feel:

0	Nothing at all
0.5	Very, very slight (just noticeable)
1	Very slight
2	Slight
3	Moderate
4	Somewhat severe
5	Severe
6	
7	Very severe
8	
9	Very, very severe
10	Maximal

During **strengthening exercises**, you should work your muscles hard for a short time until the muscles feel tired. You may also get a 'burning' sensation which is normal.

The talk test

During aerobic activity, a quick way to check if you're working at the right level for you is to say out loud:

'This activity is doing me good!'

- If you can say the sentence with one or two stops for breath, you're working at a moderate intensity. This is your aim.
- If you can say it comfortably without stopping, increase the intensity.
- If you can't speak or can't say more than one word at a time, slow down and try to get your breath back a little on the go. Don't stop suddenly.

But getting breathless makes me anxious!

It's normal to get breathless when you're active. But if you're living with a lung condition, you may feel anxious when this happens. The key is to stay calm and learn ways to manage your breathlessness.

Remember, getting breathless when you exercise is good for you! By becoming more active, your body can use oxygen better. This will actually help you to feel less out of breath when you do everyday tasks. Try the breathing techniques at blf.org.uk/breathlessness and the recovery positions on page 6.

How do I keep active during a flare-up (exacerbation)?

When you have a chest infection or a flare-up of your symptoms, you might not feel well enough to exercise as usual. But it is important to try to keep as active as you can - doing any activity is better than nothing. The sooner you're able to exercise again, the better you'll be able to maintain your fitness.

- You'll need to have some rest when you have a flare-up, but try to stay as active as you can, even if you are in hospital.

tip

Ways to stay active

- › Get up and walk around for a few minutes every hour.
- › If you are sitting in a chair, do some warm-up or cool-down exercises
- › Try a few sit-to-stand exercises throughout the day
- › Do some knee extensions

- As soon as you feel up to it, it is safe to exercise again, even if you're still taking your medicine for your flare-up. You may need to return to an easier level of activity and build up again gradually.
- If you go to an exercise or pulmonary rehabilitation group, talk to your trainer about when it would be best for you to return to the class.
- If you have been to hospital for a flare-up of COPD, you should receive a referral for pulmonary rehabilitation.
- Think 'little and often'. Exercising for a short time, but more often, may be easier.
- If you've been unwell for a while, it may take you some time to get your fitness levels back, but don't be disheartened. Build up gradually and set yourself new goals. Soon you will be able to do as much as you could before.

tip

Remember: everyone is different. You are the best person to decide what's right for you. Generally, the sooner you start, the better.

How can I stay safe when I exercise?

It's very important to look after yourself while you're active. Make sure you:

- start slowly and gradually build up
- warm up before and cool down after exercising
- carry your reliever inhaler and/or glyceryl trinitrate (GTN) spray if you have them. Use them when you need to
- wear loose, comfortable clothing and supportive non-slip shoes, like trainers
- drink plenty of water and wait for at least an hour after eating before you exercise
- use oxygen at your regular setting when exercising (if you normally use oxygen, even for just some of the time or overnight)
- are active at a level that's safe and right for you as advised by your health care professional. Use the talk test on page 3 to guide your level of activity
- talk to your health care professional if exercise makes your chest feel tight or wheezy. You may find it beneficial to take a reliever inhaler 5-20 minutes before your exercise session, but you should discuss this with your health care professional first.

Should exercise hurt?

Exercise should not hurt. Pain **during** an exercise (beyond the usual aches and pains that are normal for you) means you should stop that activity and perhaps try a different one. Muscle soreness **after** exercise is a normal response if you haven't exercised for a while. It should settle in a day or two. Avoid exercises that make them sore until it settles.

STOP if you get any sudden unpleasant symptoms including:

- chest pain or tightness that is either new for you, or not relieved by your GTN if you use it
- feeling dizzy, nauseous, clammy or cold
- feeling increasingly wheezy
- general extreme fatigue
- weakness in an arm or leg that is more than just a tired muscle

Get advice from your GP or another health care professional if you experience any of the above or call 999 in an emergency.

tip

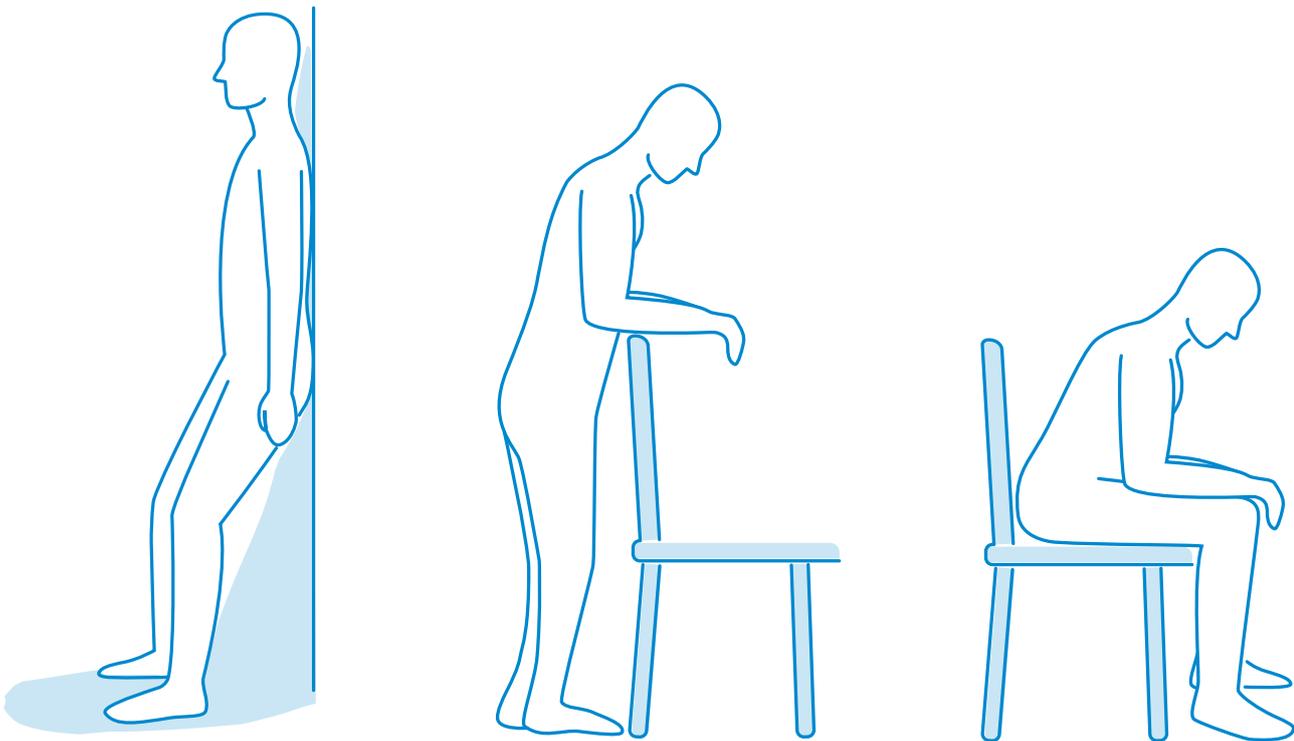
Remember, it's not harmful for you to get out of breath when you exert yourself. Be active at a level that's right for you – use the talk test on page 3 to check.

Positions to help me recover when I get out of breath

tip It's normal to feel breathless when you exercise. To help you feel in control of your breathing when you exercise, try the techniques described at blf.org.uk/breathlessness and see them demonstrated at blf.org.uk/exercise

If you get out of breath when exercising, you can also use one of these positions. They will help you to breathe more comfortably and recover more quickly.

Try one of these positions when you need to, making sure that your hands are loose and relaxed. If these positions are not comfortable, then sit upright but stay relaxed, with your arms supported.



My goals

Having a goal gives you something positive to work towards and helps you recognise your progress. Talk to your friends and family about them. Set yourself achievable goals:

- think about what you enjoy doing
- start at a level that's right for you
- build up gradually, at your own pace

And celebrate when you reach your goal!

My long-term goal

What would you like to achieve in the next few weeks or months? How would you like to feel?

Example: *“At the moment I get the bus to the shops twice a week. By the end of next month, I will walk to the shops instead.”*

Try writing your own goal:

tip

Work towards your goal with another person – it can be easier to stay motivated when you have company.

My short-term goals

Short-term goals help you gradually build up your activity levels to help you achieve your goal.

Example: *“At my exercise class, I will do two more repetitions of my arm exercises this week.”*

Try to make these goals as specific as possible and include:

- what you'll do
- when you'll do it,
- how long you'll do it for
- who you'll do it with

My first short-term goal

I will...

When will I do this?

Where will I do this?

Who will I do this with?

Prepare yourself for things that might get in the way of success

What things might stop you achieving your short-term goal? It could be the weather, feeling unwell or other commitments. Think about how you can overcome them:

Things that could get in the way	To overcome this, I will...
<i>Poor weather</i>	<i>... do my exercise programme at home instead</i>

If you don't achieve your goal, that's OK. Don't be disappointed with yourself – think about what you did achieve, no matter how small.

Take some time to think about why you didn't achieve your goal:

- Was it too difficult?
- Did you get enough support?
- Did you give yourself enough time?
- Did you actually do the exercises?

Be honest with yourself. Also be kind to yourself and return to an easier stage of your activity plan if it was too hard. Or think about making changes to your goal to make it more achievable next time.

You might find it useful to keep an activity diary to help you set and review your goals. You can download our 12 week activity diary at blf.org.uk/12-week-diary

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