

Respiratory Physiotherapy Newsletter

January 2026



Pulmonary Rehabilitation

What is it?

Pulmonary Rehabilitation (PR) is a structured programme combining exercise and education for people with chronic respiratory diseases. The sessions are led by trained physiotherapists and nurses who understand how lung conditions affect daily life.

What happens during the programme?

Over 6 weeks, you'll attend twice-weekly sessions. Each session includes:

- A warm-up/cool-down and gentle exercise tailored to your level.
- Education on managing symptoms, medications, and flare-ups.

Benefits of PR:

- Reduces breathlessness and fatigue.
- Improves strength, stamina and confidence.
- Helps you manage anxiety related to breathlessness.
- Reduces hospital admissions and improves quality of life.

To join a programme, speak to your GP, respiratory nurse or physiotherapist about a referral. Classes run in local community centres.



About our service

The Respiratory Community Physiotherapy Team provides specialist care for people living with long-term lung conditions such as:

- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD).
- Bronchiectasis.
- Pulmonary Fibrosis.
- Asthma.



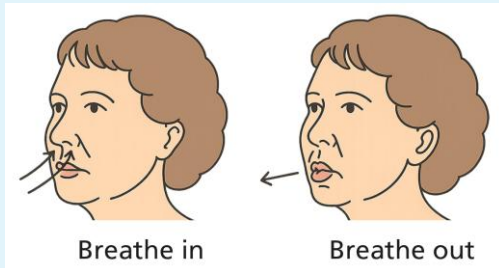
We work across the community to help you manage your breathing, improve your physical fitness, and increase your confidence in daily life. Our service offers:

- Individual assessments at home or in clinic.
- Pulmonary rehabilitation programmes.
- Education sessions on breathlessness, exercise, and managing flare-ups.
- Support for oxygen therapy.
- Support on inhaler use and chest clearance.
- Advice on healthy living, nutrition and smoking cessation.

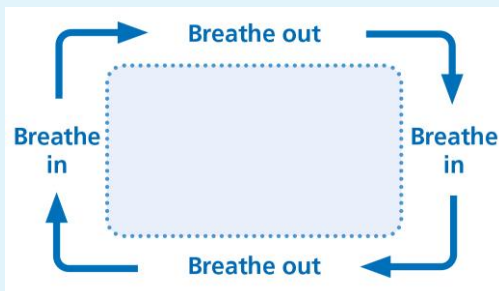
Top tips from the team

1. Control your breathing

- Try pursed-lip breathing: breathe in through your nose for two seconds, then out through pursed lips for four seconds.



- Rectangular breathing.



2. Stay active

- Even gentle exercise such as walking, or seated exercise helps keep your muscles strong.
- Aim for little and often - short, regular activity is better than long, exhausting sessions.

3. Pace yourself

- Break tasks into smaller steps. Rest before you feel tired.
- Use energy-saving techniques at home - sit when washing up, use a trolley or backpack to carry items.

4. Manage flare-ups early

- Keep an action plan with your GP or nurse.
- Recognise early warning signs like increased cough, sputum, or breathlessness, and seek advice promptly.

5. Stay hydrated and eat well

- Small, frequent meals can make breathing easier.
- Try to include lean proteins, fruits, and vegetables daily.

Smoking cessation: Small steps, big impact

If you smoke, quitting is the single most important step you can take to protect your lungs. Within weeks of stopping:

- Your breathing becomes easier.
- Your circulation improves.
- Coughing and mucus production decrease.
- You reduce your risk of heart disease, stroke, and lung infections.

Support is available through:

- NHS Stop Smoking Services.
- Nicotine replacement, e-cigarettes, and local 'Smoke Free' services can help.
- Local pharmacies offering nicotine replacement or vaping advice.
- Leeds Self-referral to stop smoking service – **0800 168 4219** or <https://leedsstopsmoking.co.uk>
- Quitline **0300 123 1044** or www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking

Research shows you are three times more likely to quit successfully with professional support than trying alone.



What our patients say

"I never thought exercise could help my lungs, but after just a few weeks of pulmonary rehab, I can walk further and recover faster. The team gave me the confidence to keep moving and not fear breathlessness." **John, age 68, COPD patient.**

"Before I started pulmonary rehab, I could barely walk across my living room without stopping. The team taught me how to control my breathing and keep calm. Now I can walk to the shop and back — and I've made friends who understand what I'm going through." **Margaret, age 72**

"The exercises were tough at first, but the physios encouraged us and adapted things to our level. I feel stronger, more confident, and less anxious." **Ahmed, age 64**



Healthy weight and nutrition for better breathing

Maintaining a healthy weight can help you breathe more comfortably.



- If you are underweight, you may have less strength and energy to breathe effectively. Try to eat small, high-calorie meals and snacks throughout the day.
- If you are overweight, reducing excess weight can ease the pressure on your lungs and improve stamina.
- Focus on balanced meals with lean protein, wholegrains, fruits and vegetables.
- Staying hydrated (around 6–8 cups of water daily) helps keep mucus thinner and easier to clear.
- If you're struggling with your diet, ask your physiotherapist or GP to refer you to a dietitian for personalised advice.

Get in touch

If you'd like more information about our service or to discuss a referral, please contact us:

Community Respiratory Team

Tel: 0113 843 4200

Email: licht.longtermconditions@nhs.net

Visit our webpage by clicking the link below or by scanning the QR code opposite:

<https://leedscommunityhealthcare.nhs.uk/respiratory/>

Did you know?

Pulmonary Rehabilitation (PR) is one of the most effective, evidence-based treatments for people with long-term respiratory conditions.

National and international guidelines

- NICE (2019) recommends PR for all patients with stable COPD who consider themselves functionally limited by breathlessness (usually MRC Dyspnoea Scale ≥ 3).
- GOLD (2023) highlights PR as a “core component of COPD management”, improving exercise capacity, symptoms, and emotional wellbeing.
- The British Thoracic Society (2021) supports offering PR within four weeks of hospital discharge following an exacerbation of COPD.

Proven benefits of pulmonary rehabilitation:

- **Improves exercise tolerance:** Patients can walk up to 40% further after completing PR.
- **Reduces breathlessness:** The Medical Research Council (MRC) scale for dyspnoea typically improves by at least one grade.
- **Reduces hospital admissions:** Completing PR reduces the risk of readmission within 12 months by around 30%.
- **Enhances mental wellbeing:** Regular participation helps reduce anxiety and depression linked to chronic breathlessness.
- **Long-term impact:** Patients who maintain exercise routines after PR experience sustained benefits for up to 12–18 months.



We're here to help you breathe better and live better