

Managing COPD™

Summer 2022



COPD and Physical Activity

Regular exercise is part of a healthy, active lifestyle. But if you're living with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), it can be hard to know how to exercise safely and effectively. Don't worry, you can still make moderate exercise part of your healthy lifestyle. Just make sure you talk to your provider before starting or making changes to your fitness routine.

Moderate exercise has many benefits, including strengthening respiratory muscles, which makes it easier to breathe. Exercise can also boost energy levels and self-esteem, improve sleep and muscle strength, and help manage anxiety, stress, and depression.

Certain types of exercise can be especially beneficial to individuals with COPD, including stretching, resistance training with weights or bands, and aerobic exercise such as walking, biking, or swimming. Many of these workouts can be done in the comfort of your own home. Your doctor or respiratory therapist can show you exercises to try and offer guidance about what types and what amounts of exercise are right for you. Your doctor may also adjust your oxygen flow rate, if you use supplemental oxygen.

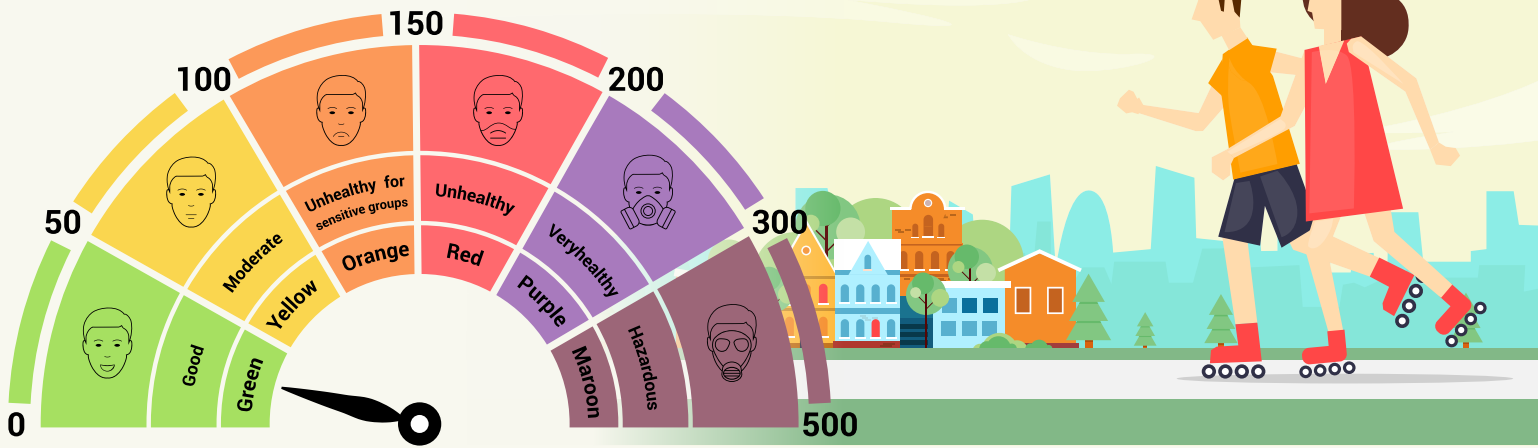
Pulmonary rehabilitation is another great option for incorporating fitness into your routine. This program includes education and exercise classes that teach you about your lungs and COPD, as well as how to be active even with shortness of breath. The classes are generally conducted in a group setting, offering a chance to meet, connect, and give and receive support from others with COPD. You can learn more about pulmonary rehabilitation here.

If you're ready to get started but are unsure where to begin, consider the following tips and ideas from the American Lung Association:

- Any amount of effort is progress! Try to get up and out each day, even if it's just a walk to the mailbox or to take a shower.
- Set achievable goals, such as taking a short walk around the block every day, and, working in with your doctor, change them as your strength improves.
- Participate in activities you enjoyed before you were diagnosed. You may find you need to make some modifications, but participation in familiar, enjoyable activities can help you stay motivated and engaged.
- Light stretching is a great way to ease into physical activity and avoid overexertion.
- A wide variety of exercise programs are available on your television, online, or using mobile apps.
- Find a partner! Exercising with a friend or loved one is a great way to stay motivated and accountable. You can do simple exercises together at home or go on walks.

Staying active is an important way to improve your health and help manage your COPD. Talk to your doctor about how to get started.

Reference: "Physical Activity and COPD." American Lung Association, <https://www.lung.org/lung-health-diseases/lung-disease-lookup/copd/living-with-copd/physical-activity>.



COPD and the Air Quality Index (AQI)

The quality of the air that we breathe is critical to every everyone's health. Air pollution can affect anybody, but it's especially harmful to individuals with lung disease, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

The Air Quality Index (AQI) is a helpful tool that measures air quality in real-time to help you determine when you may need to avoid outdoor activities.

If you or a loved one are living with COPD, this article has helpful information about air quality and tips for using the AQI to make safe and healthy choices.

WHAT IS THE AIR QUALITY INDEX?

- The AQI tracks smog and air pollutants (including tiny particles from ash, power plants and factories, vehicle exhaust, soil dust, pollen, and other pollution) in more than 800 counties nationwide. Air pollution levels are measured daily, ranked on a scale of 0 (for perfect air) to 500 (air pollution levels that pose an immediate danger to the public). The AQI ranks air pollution levels into five color-coded categories and also recommendations based on each category.

WHY IS THE AIR QUALITY INDEX IMPORTANT?

- Understanding present air quality conditions can help individuals make or change plans to reduce the risk of exposure to harmful air. Air pollution can be more harmful to individuals with certain risk factors including children and seniors, individuals with diabetes, high blood pressure, or a history of heart attack or stroke, as well as those with lung disease. It's important to remember, however, that even healthy adults who work or exercise outdoors can be at risk on bad air days.

WHERE DO I ACCESS THE DAILY AQI REPORT?

- The AQI is published in newspapers, radio, television, and websites—including www.airnow.gov—year-round.
- You may call or email your local state air pollution control agency, some of which offer air quality forecasts by email or text message. A directory of state and local air pollution control agencies can be found at www.4cleanair.org.
- If air quality reports are not available in your community, contact your local media and let them know you'd like them to offer air quality reports and forecasts as an important public health service.

I HAVE COPD. WHAT SHOULD—OR SHOULDN'T—I DO, BASED ON AIR QUALITY?

- If the day's air quality level is orange or worse, adjust your plans for the day.
- Avoid prolonged exposure outdoors, as the health effects of pollution are worsened with longer periods of exposure.
- Avoid vigorous activity in outdoor and high-traffic areas. The deep, rapid breathing that accompanies exercise can also worsen the impact of air pollution.
- Speak out! Let your elected officials know your concerns about air pollution in your local area and show your support for stronger pollution control measures.

Reference: "Air Quality Index." American Lung Association, <https://www.lung.org/clean-air/outdoors/air-quality-index>.

Mental Health Matters

TIPS AND RESOURCES FOR COPING WITH STRESS

Many of us encounter situations that can be stressful and overwhelming. Stress is a normal response to a challenge or demand.

In short bursts, stress can be positive. For example, it can help you avoid danger or meet a deadline. But chronic stress, or stress that lasts a long time, can be harmful to your health. That's why it's vital that you learn how to cope with stress in healthy ways.

One way to cope with stress is to take care of your physical health. This includes eating balanced meals, getting enough sleep, staying physically active, and unwinding through meditation, deep breathing, or stretching. Caring for your body also means limiting alcohol intake, avoiding tobacco and illicit drugs, and taking prescription medications properly. Preventive measures, including routine check-ups, vaccinations, screenings, or other tests recommended by a healthcare provider are also key to maintaining good physical health.


It's also important that you are mindful of your social, emotional and mental health. Make time for activities you enjoy. When you are experiencing stress, make time for activities you enjoy such as connecting with friends or talking to people you trust. Become involved in community- or faith-based organizations. Although it's important to stay informed, take breaks from reading, watching, and listening to news stories. Consider limiting your news intake and take intentional breaks from your phone, television, and computer screens.

If you feel overwhelmed by stress or if it's affecting your health, contact your healthcare provider. Your provider may refer you to a mental health specialist who can help you determine the causes of your stress and provide tools to help you better manage it.

There are also free and confidential resources available at [cdc.gov/mentalhealth](https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth).

Seek connection during times of stress through visits, phone calls, or video chats. Taking care of yourself can better equip you to help others who may be struggling.

Reference: "Stress and Coping Resources." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 20 July 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/tools-resources/index.htm>.

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- A man and a woman are walking together on a paved path in a park. The man is on the left, wearing a white t-shirt and grey shorts, and is gesturing with his hands as he speaks. The woman is on the right, wearing a white t-shirt and blue leggings with a pink jacket tied around her waist. They are both smiling and appear to be in a pleasant conversation. The background shows trees and a bright, sunny day.
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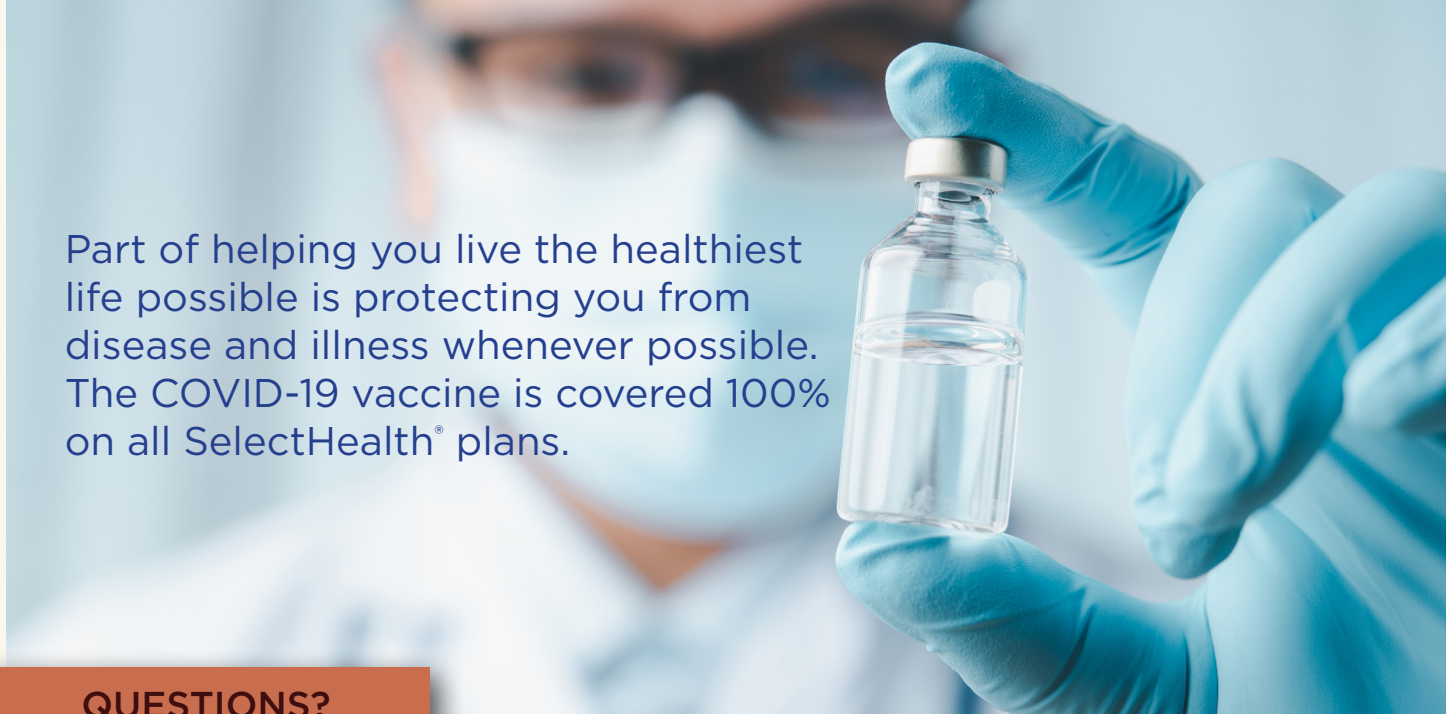
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Part of helping you live the healthiest life possible is protecting you from disease and illness whenever possible. The COVID-19 vaccine is covered 100% on all SelectHealth® plans.

QUESTIONS?

Please visit selecthealth.org/who-we-are/covid-19-coverage or call Member Services at **800-538-5038** if you have any questions regarding COVID-19 coverage information.