Contact us
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A guide to pulmonary rehabilitation
This leaflet gives information about the pulmonary rehabilitation programme at St Thomas’ Hospital.
What is pulmonary rehabilitation?
Pulmonary rehabilitation is a supervised, personalised seven-week programme of exercise and education. It is designed specifically for people with lung conditions who experience breathlessness in daily life.

What are the benefits?
- Helps you to walk further.
- Reduces your breathlessness when doing day-to-day activities, such as walking or going up stairs.
- Improves the amount of physical activity you can do.
- Increases your confidence to be more active and to exercise safely.
- Improves your quality of life.
- Helps you to manage your lung condition.
- Gives you an opportunity to meet people with similar conditions and share experiences.

What happens during the programme?
The class is led by a specialist respiratory physiotherapist with input from other healthcare professionals. Each class will include a warm-up, exercises and a cool-down.

Everyone exercises at a different level depending on their own ability. You will get moderately out of breath when you exercise, but this is part of your rehabilitation. You will be monitored carefully and never be asked to do more than you can safely manage.

The session will also include an educational talk on a topic relevant to your condition. You will be part of group, this is normally 8-16 people.

What do I need to bring to each session?
- Clothes you feel comfortable to exercise in, including trainers or shoes with flat soles.
- Reading glasses, if required.
- Your reliever inhaler and spacer device, if you use one.
- Other medications if needed, such as glyceryl tri-nitrate (GTN) spray or insulin.
- Any ambulatory oxygen, if used.

Where will it be held?
Pulmonary Rehabilitation is held in the Physiotherapy Department at St Thomas’ Hospital. However if a more local programme is available, the staff will discuss this with you. Transport to St Thomas’ Hospital can be arranged if required.

What happens after I’ve been referred?
You will be invited to a one-to-one assessment with a specialist physiotherapist or occupational therapist. This will take place in the chest clinic at St Thomas’ Hospital, and they will discuss the next steps with you.

Comments from patients
“It helped my breathing and fitness level. I can walk so much further than before”

“I found it very helpful, and the people who were running it were very friendly and encouraging.”

“I now have the confidence to go for it and not worry about getting out of breath.”

Useful sources of information
British Lung Foundation website
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