



MDwise

A McLaren Company

COPD: Using Exercise to Feel Better

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Overview

When you have COPD, activity and exercise can:

- Build muscle strength and endurance. This will help you be more active—you will be able to do more activities for longer amounts of time.
- Reduce shortness of breath.

Upper body exercises increase strength in arm and shoulder muscles, which provide support to the rib cage. They help in daily tasks such as carrying groceries and doing housework.

Lower body exercises develop lower body muscles and will help you move around more easily for longer periods of time.

Aerobic exercise gets more oxygen to your muscles. This allows them to work longer.

Exercises for COPD can be done nearly anywhere. They are often done as part of a pulmonary rehabilitation program.

How do you exercise for COPD?

Exercises for COPD are simple to do and take little time.

If you become breathless while doing any of the exercises, rest in a position where your shoulders are supported, such as in a chair, and wait until you can breathe easily again.

- Talk to your doctor.
Your doctor may ask that you do specific exercises and will help you figure out how often and how long to do them. You may also get help with setting your long-term exercise program goals. It may take weeks before you are able to reach your goals. But how long it takes is not as important as doing the exercises consistently.
- Start slowly and gradually.

For each exercise, either time how long you can do it or count the number of times you can do it before you are mildly out of breath. Then rest and move on to the next exercise. Each week, increase the time you spend doing each exercise or how many times you do each one.

- Pick activities that you enjoy.
- Always have a warm-up and cool-down.
This is a good time for stretches (See figure 1 in appendix).
- Pay attention to your breathing.
Try to breathe slowly to save your breath. Breathe in through your nose, keeping your mouth closed.
This warms and moisturizes the air you breathe. Breathe out through pursed lips.

Aerobic exercise

Aerobic exercises increase the amount of oxygen that is delivered to your muscles. More oxygen helps the muscles work longer. This helps you do more activities for longer periods of time.

Any exercise that raises your heart rate and keeps it up for a long time will improve your aerobic fitness. These exercises include:

- Walking.
- Using a treadmill.
- Cycling or using a stationary bicycle.
- Swimming.
- Water aerobics.

Daily activities can also be aerobic. These activities include:

- Walking to work or to run errands.
- Sweeping (perhaps to fast-paced music).
- Playing actively with children.
- Walking your dog.

Talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise program. Your doctor will help you know how often and how long to exercise. You can also get help setting your long-term exercise goals.

Checking your exercise intensity

The talk test is an easy way to check your exercise intensity.

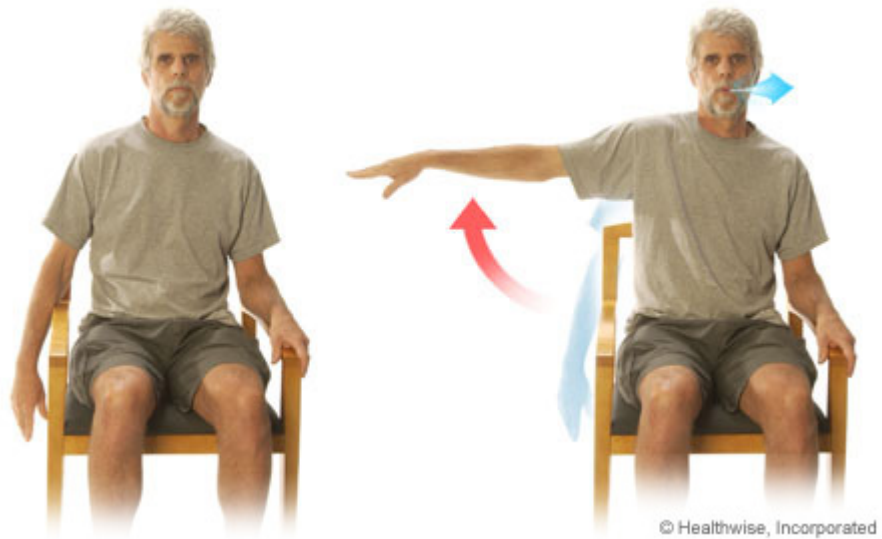
- You're getting moderate aerobic activity if you can talk but can't sing while you do the activity.
- You're getting vigorous aerobic activity if you can only say a few words while you do it.
- You are exercising too hard if you can't talk while you do it.
- You may not be exercising hard enough if you can sing while you do it.

Upper and lower body exercises

Before starting any exercise program, talk to your health professional. They may ask that you do specific exercises and will help you decide how often and how long to do them.

Start the exercise slowly and gradually. Either keep track of how long you can do it or count the number of times you can do it before you are mildly out of breath. Then rest and move on to the next exercise. Each week, increase the amount of time you do them or how many you do.

Arm extensions



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1. Sit or stand with your feet slightly apart.
2. Start with your arms by your side.
3. Breathe out as you raise one arm to shoulder height, keeping the arm straight and pointing to the side.
4. Breathe in as you return your arm to your side.
5. Repeat at least 3 times. Over time, increase to 8 to 12 times.
6. Repeat these steps with your other arm.

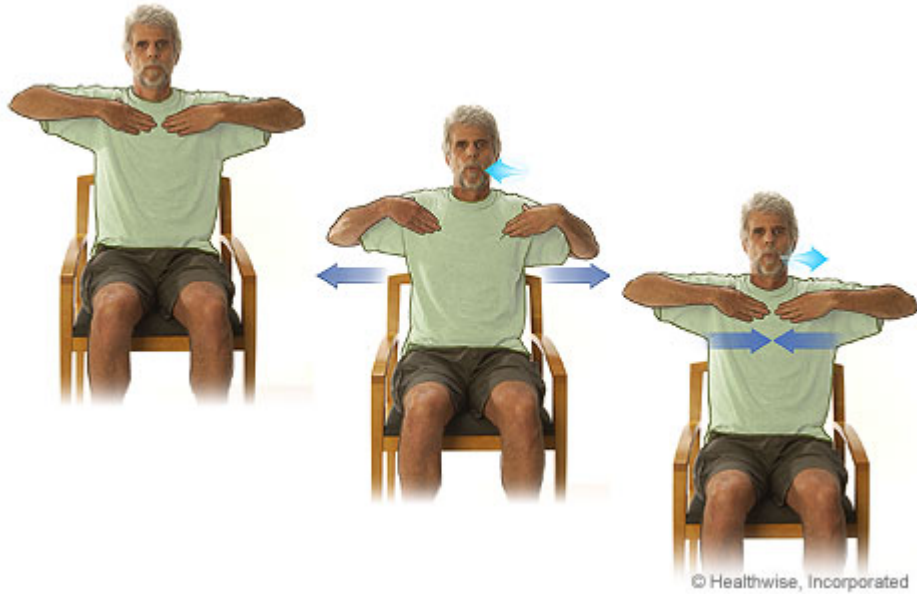
Elbow circles



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1. Sit or stand with your feet slightly apart.
2. Place your hands on your shoulders with your elbows at shoulder level and pointing out.
3. Slowly make a circle with your elbows.
4. Breathe out as you start the circle and breathe in as you complete the circle.
5. Repeat at least 3 times. Over time, increase to 8 to 12 times.
6. Change direction and repeat your circles.

Elbow breathing



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1. Sit or stand with your feet slightly apart.
2. Lift your elbows to shoulder level, and touch your fingertips in front of your chest.
3. Breathe in as you pull your elbows back so that your fingertips separate.
4. Breathe out as you return your elbows and fingertips to the original position.
5. Repeat at least 3 times. Over time, increase to 8 to 12 times.

Knee extension



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1. Sit in a chair with your feet slightly apart.
2. Breathe out as you straighten one knee and raise your leg.
3. Breathe in as you return your foot to the floor.
4. Repeat at least 3 times. Over time, increase to 8 to 12 times.
5. Repeat these steps with your other leg.

Leg lift



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1. Sit in a chair with your feet slightly apart.
2. Breathe out as you lift one leg straight up so that the knee rises toward your shoulder.
3. Breathe in as you return your foot to the floor.
4. Repeat at least 3 times. Over time, increase to 8 to 12 times.
5. Repeat these steps with your other leg.

Step up



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1. Stand on the floor, facing a bottom step. Hold on to the handrail. Or you can use a thick book or a case of soup cans. Hold on to a chair or counter.
2. Breathe out as you step up with your right leg.
3. Breathe in as you step back down.
4. Repeat at least 3 times. Over time, increase to 8 to 12 times.
5. Repeat these steps with your left leg.

Credits

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Appendix

Topic Images

Figure 1

Stretches

Do all stretches gradually. Do not push or bounce the stretch. You should feel a stretch, not pain.

Breathe normally as you stretch. Do not hold your breath. If you like to time your breathing with your exercise, you can breathe out as you stretch, breathe normally in and out 2 or 3 times as you hold the stretch, and then relax. This will mean each stretch takes 15 to 30 seconds.

Latissimus stretch



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1. Stand with your back straight and your feet shoulder-width apart. You can do this stretch sitting down if you are not steady on your feet.
2. Hold your arms above your head, and hold one hand with the other.
3. Pull upward while leaning straight over toward your right side. Keep your lower body straight. You should feel the stretch along your left side.
4. Hold 15 to 30 seconds, then switch sides.
5. Repeat 2 to 4 times for each side.

Triceps stretch



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1. Stand with your back straight and your feet shoulder-width apart. You can do this stretch sitting down if you are not steady on your feet.
2. Bring your left elbow straight up while bending your arm.
3. Grab your left elbow with your right hand, and pull your left elbow toward your head with light pressure. If you are more flexible, you may pull your arm slightly behind your head. You will feel the stretch along the back of your arm.
4. Hold 15 to 30 seconds, then switch elbows.
5. Repeat 2 to 4 times for each arm.

Calf stretch



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1. Place your hands on a wall for balance. You can also do this with your hands on the back of a chair, a countertop, or a tree.
2. Step back with your left leg. Keep the leg straight, and press your left heel into the floor.
3. Press your hips forward, bending your right leg slightly. You will feel the stretch in your left calf.
4. Hold the stretch 15 to 30 seconds.
5. Repeat 2 to 4 times for each leg.

Quadriceps stretch



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1. Lie on your side with one hand supporting your head.
2. Stretch your leg back by pulling your foot toward your buttock. You will feel the stretch in the front of your thigh. If this causes stress on your knees, do not do this stretch.
3. Hold the stretch 15 to 30 seconds.
4. Repeat 2 to 4 times for each leg.

Groin stretch



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1. Sit on the floor and put the soles of your feet together.
2. Grab your ankles and gently pull your legs toward you.
3. Use your elbows to press your knees toward the floor. You will feel the stretch in your inner thighs.
4. Hold 15 to 30 seconds.
5. Repeat 2 to 4 times.

Hamstring stretch



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1. Lie on the floor. Extend your left leg out straight with your toes pointing up. If your back is uncomfortable, use a rolled washcloth or small towel for support.
2. Bend your right knee. Gently pull your right leg toward you as you straighten that knee. You should feel a gentle stretch down the back of your right leg.
3. Hold the stretch 15 to 30 seconds.
4. Repeat 2 to 4 times for each leg.

Note: The "printer friendly" document will not contain all the information available in the online document. Some information (e.g. cross-references to other topics, definitions or medical illustrations) is only available in the online version.



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