

Patient Education

Pulmonary Rehabilitation



Take Control

Managing your health and healthcare for patients with lung disease

This handout outlines the topics covered in class.

You will learn guidelines and tips to stay healthy and manage your healthcare.

You are the key member of your healthcare team. Be an active member. Research shows that patients who are involved in their care tend to have better outcomes.

This handout details guidelines and tips to help you maintain your current health and prevent future health problems.

Ask questions and share your concerns. Prepare for healthcare visits and rely on your healthcare providers for information and decision-making.

Your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, therapists, exercise physiologists, technicians, dietitians, and other providers will work with you to help you stay healthy.

Follow Your Doctors' Orders

At each healthcare visit, be sure you understand the information you are told. It may help you to repeat instructions to be sure they are clear.

Tell your doctor or other provider if a medication or therapy does not seem to be working. Tell them why you think the medicine or treatment is not working. That way, your provider can alter the therapy, change the medication, or decide to stop treatment.

Medications

Maintain a current list of the medications you take on a regular basis, whether you take them routinely or only as needed. Keep a copy of this list with you at all times and provide a copy for each of your health care providers.

Include the medications that have been prescribed by a doctor, and those that you purchase without a prescription (“over-the-counter”). Over-the-counter medications might include:

- **Pain relievers (such as Tylenol[®], ibuprofen, Aleve[®]).**
- **Vitamins, minerals and other dietary supplements.**
- **Cold remedies.**
- **Laxatives.**
- **Treatments for heartburn or upset stomach (such as Tums[®], Zantac[®], Roloids[®]).**
- **Herbal or alternative therapies.**

A thorough medication list will include:

- Name of the medication (generic and/or trade name).
- Dosage you take (such as “20 mg”).
- How often you take it (such as three times per day; at bedtime).
- Reason it is prescribed (such as anxiety; high blood pressure).
- Special instructions (such as take on empty stomach; do not take with milk or grapefruit juice; avoid sun exposure).
- Date you started the medication.
- Name of the doctor or provider who prescribed the medication.
- Pharmacy where the prescription was filled.
- Date you stopped the medication and the reason (such as caused a rash; caused stomach upset).

Some medications, including over-the counter preparations, can have unwanted interactions with other medications you are taking. These interactions can include an increase or decrease in the absorption of the medication, which may alter the effectiveness.

One example – many patients with heart conditions are prescribed blood-thinning medications, such as Coumadin, which lengthens bleeding time (the length of time it takes for your blood to clot) and helps prevent blood clots. Some over-the counter drugs that can also lengthen bleeding time and possibly lead to complications for patients having surgery include:

Vitamin E, aspirin, garlic, feverfew, ginkgo biloba, coenzyme Q10, ginger, ginseng and St. John’s Wort.

Oxygen

- Use oxygen as prescribed by your doctor.
- Work with your oxygen provider to ensure that the equipment you use is well maintained, functions properly and that you have an adequate supply.
- Clean and replace your nasal cannula often.

Fight infections

Practice good hygiene

Proper hand washing may be **the key** to stopping the spread of most diseases. Wash with soap and warm water to kill the germs on your hands. Rub all the surfaces from wrist to fingertips, for as long as it takes to sing the “Happy Birthday” song. Rinse well and dry thoroughly. Keep a bottle of the fast-drying, alcohol-based hand cleaning gel in your purse or car. These gels have been found to effectively kill disease-causing microbes. Use the gel when you don’t have access to hand-washing facilities.

Be sure to wash your hands:

- Before eating or handling your medications.
- Before and after food preparation (be extra careful when handling raw meat, eggs, fruits, or vegetables).
- Before you have contact with any of your mucus membranes (mouth, nose, eyes, etc.) or open cuts.
- After using the restroom.

Wash bathroom and kitchen towels and sponges often in hot water to prevent bacteria build-up, or use disposables. Use facial tissues instead of cloth, and throw them away right after using them. Don’t forget to clean surfaces you touch often: door handles, telephones, stair rails, etc. A common cold virus can survive up to three hours on inanimate objects!

Drink plenty of liquids

Your mucus membranes will work better if they are moist. Secretions will be thinner. You will have less congestion. And, you will avoid dehydration. Drink eight to 12 glasses of water or juice per day. Avoid drinking fluids that are loaded with calories, sugar and caffeine, especially pop or colas.

Take care of your teeth

Brush and floss after eating and before going to bed. Visit the dentist every six months. Change your toothbrush every three to four months and after you’ve been sick.

Call your doctor if you have:

- **Fever and chills.**
- **Increased shortness of breath and/or wheezing.**
- **Increase in frequency or severity of coughing.**
- **Changes in your sputum (increased amount; change in color from clear or white to yellow, gray, or green; or change in consistency).**
- **Sudden weight gain or loss.**
- **Swelling around the ankles or eyes.**
- **Heart palpitations or chest pain.**
- **Unusual dizziness, sleepiness, headache, visual changes, trouble thinking, irritability.**
- **Loss of appetite.**
- **Dehydration.**
- **Blood in sputum, urine, or bowel movement.**

In the air

Avoid conditions that may make your breathing worse:

- Adverse weather conditions – extreme heat or cold; high humidity.
- High altitudes – oxygen content is decreased.
- Pollution – if you have an e-mail account, consider signing up for the American Lung Association of Washington’s “Breathe Easy Network” which provides an air quality forecast service. To subscribe, send an e-mail to alaw@alaw.org. Type “Air Watch Northwest” in the subject line and “subscribe” in the e-mail text. You will receive an e-mail alert when the air quality is forecasted to be at a moderate or higher level on the Air Quality Index for the following two days.
- Pollen – especially if you also suffer from allergies or hay fever.
- Second-hand smoke.
- Aerosol sprays – the propellant can be highly toxic. Choose pump sprays instead of aerosol. Wear a mask to avoid inhaling sprayed particles.
- Strong odors – from cooking (especially frying), perfumes and cosmetics, cleaning products, flowers, scented candles.
- Mold and mildew – control moisture and leaks. Use exhaust fans or open windows daily to provide proper ventilation. Make sure your dryer vents to the outside. Insulate walls and ceilings. Keep furniture away from outside walls. Minimize simmering of liquids and foods.

Get rid of mold and mildew. Scrub it away with soap and water. Then apply a solution of one part bleach to four parts water to help keep it from coming back.

- Dust and dust mites – vacuum and dust often and change the vacuum bag regularly. Change the filter in your furnace often. Have your heating and/or cooling system serviced once a year. Launder bedding weekly in hot water to kill dust mites and have draperies laundered or dry-cleaned.

Manage Shortness of Breath and Anxiety

- Pace yourself and use proper breathing techniques.
- Use “pursed-lips” and “diaphragmatic breathing” to help avoid or decrease shortness of breath.
- To decrease your level of anxiety, use relaxation techniques and/or take the medicines prescribed by your doctor.

Did You Know?

The American Lung Association of Washington (ALAW) offers a free home indoor-air assessment. The “Master Home Environmentalist” program trains volunteers who will come to your home, identify health hazards and offer suggestions for changes you can make to improve the air quality.

To learn more, contact the ALAW office nearest you:

King County:

206-441-5100

Pierce County:

253-798-2954

Toll-Free:

1-800-732-9339

Or visit their on-line

Web site:

www.alaw.org

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC Clinic staff are also available to help at any time.

- Pulmonary Rehabilitation
206-598-3195
- Medical Specialties Center
206-598-4615

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Control Your Weight and Eat a Healthy Diet

- Eat a balanced diet.
- Limit alcohol and caffeine intake.
- Take steps to lose or gain weight as needed. You may find it easier to eat five or six small meals per day rather than three regular meals.

Exercise and Stay Active

- Regular exercise will help you maintain or improve your balance, strength and coordination. It will also contribute to your overall well-being, both emotionally and physically. Exercise at least three days per week for at least 30 minutes per day.
- Join an exercise class for the socialization and support, or exercise at home using stationary equipment.
- Take a brisk walk around your neighborhood. The best exercise for you is the exercise you'll do!
- To decrease your risk of developing blood clots, don't cross your legs or sit in one position for long periods of time. Get up and move around. Flex and relax your muscles to keep blood pumping. Stop frequently on long car trips.

Get Plenty of Rest

- Try to maintain a regular schedule, going to bed and arising at about the same time each day.
- If your sleep is interrupted at night, take a short nap in the afternoon.
- Avoid excess caffeine and alcohol, which can affect sleep.
- Don't exercise just before bedtime.

If You Do Get Sick

- Increase your fluid intake and rest.
- Contact your doctor if you have any of the symptoms listed on page three.
- Do not treat yourself with leftover antibiotics.
- If your doctor does prescribe antibiotics, take them as directed and finish the entire prescription, *even if you start to feel better before you've taken every pill!*