

## Managing other conditions

### Respiratory

#### **What if I've already got respiratory condition (E.g. Asthma, COPD, Bronchiectasis, Interstitial lung disease)?**

We know that people with existing breathing conditions may have some additional concerns about catching the coronavirus. You are at no more risk of catching the virus than anyone else but if you do then you could become more ill. As COVID affects the lungs, it may be more difficult for you to judge what is causing symptoms.

Washing your hands on a regular basis (especially after visiting the toilet and before eating) and social distancing will reduce your risk of exposure to the virus and it is important you do this.

#### **Should I take my medication as usual?**

It is important that you continue taking the medication that has been prescribed for you. Otherwise this could have an effect on your overall condition and possibly make you feel worse. If you have any concerns or queries about your medication please speak to your local pharmacist or your General Practitioner (GP). Your local surgery or pharmacist can organise a delivery for you.

It is very important that you clean your spacer and inhaler, and any masks/mouthpieces at least weekly.

If you do need to be admitted to hospital, please remember to bring your inhalers, and an up to date list of your medication with you.

#### **What should I do if I feel unwell?**

Early treatment for a flare-up (exacerbation) of your lung condition may avoid needing to go to hospital, and you may be able to be treated at home.

You should call your doctor who can assess your symptoms and likelihood of COVID. They can prescribe treatment for you.

If you have a community respiratory nurse they can offer further advice and support.

If you are unsure or outside doctors' hours you can call 111 for advice or 999 if your breathing problem is very severe.

## **Does it matter if I smoke?**

The chemicals and particles in cigarette smoke will irritate and damage your lungs if you do not stop. It is never too late to stop. Help and support is available, and you are four times more likely to stop with help from a stop smoking advisor.

[www.quitready.co.uk](http://www.quitready.co.uk)

## **What can I do if I feel breathless?**

If you have a 'rescue' inhaler you can take that as prescribed.

Using a handheld fan (not in a public place) moved slowly cheek to cheek can be helpful.

Try to slow your breathing (e.g. breathe in and count to four; breathe out slowly and count to seven).

If you have swollen feet and ankles you may have extra fluid in your body so you will should talk to your doctor about this.

## **What about routine hospital appointments?**

Many hospitals have had to make a difficult decision to postpone many of the non-urgent hospital appointments and planned procedures due to the COVID outbreak. These decisions have been in line with national guidance, you will be offered another appointment when it is safe to do so.

Patients should be contacted by their local hospital teams to see how their appointment has been affected.

Some of the appointments may go ahead and some will be offered either face to face (urgent appointments or via the telephone (virtually)).

If you are unsure what has happened to your appointment then please contact your local hospital switchboard or ring the number on the appointment letter.

However, it is important to remember that you should not attend if you have any symptoms of COVID, or have suffered with sickness or diarrhoea in the last 48 hours.

## **How do I know if I'm on the shielding list?**

Please follow the link to the Government guidelines on shielding:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-COVID-19](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-COVID-19)

For other useful information about respiratory conditions and COVID please see some useful links below:

[www.blf.org.uk](http://www.blf.org.uk) (British Lung Foundation)

[www.patient.info](http://www.patient.info)