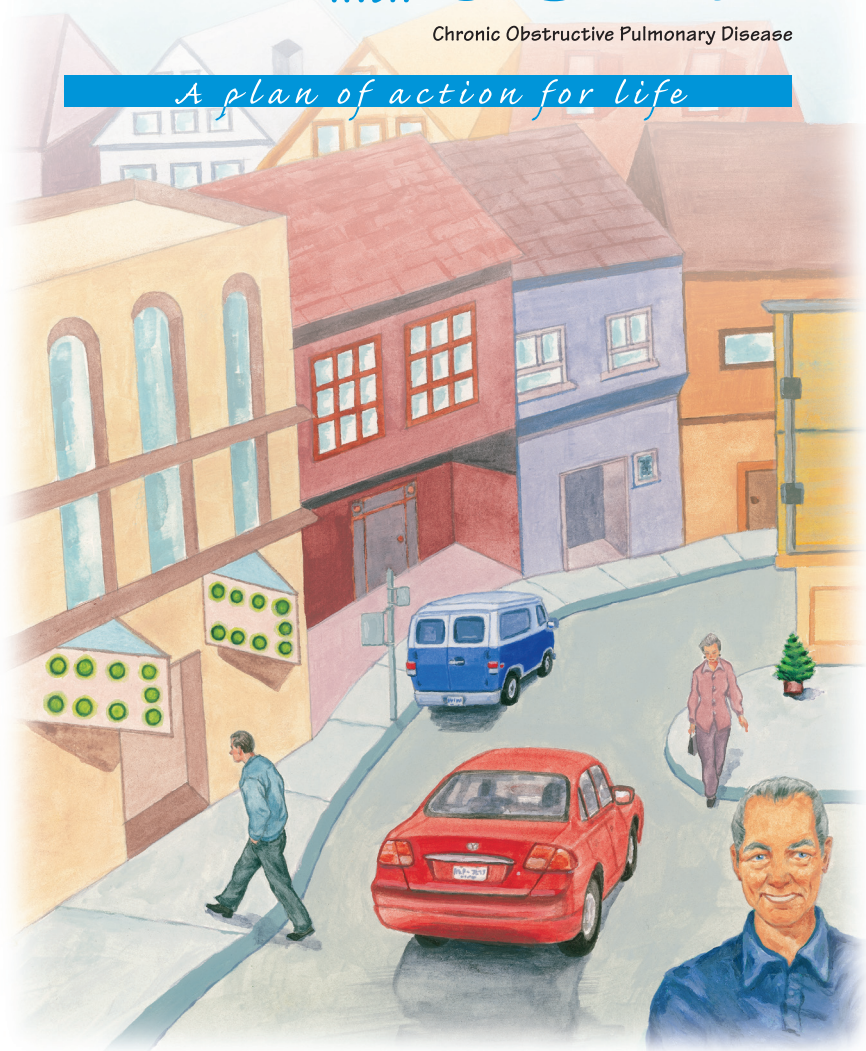


# Living Well with COPD™

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease

*A plan of action for life*



*get moving... breathe easy*

## Get moving... breathe easy

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Despite constant breathlessness, it is very important for people with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) or any chronic respiratory disease to keep active; otherwise they gradually lose autonomy and quality of life because of persistent fatigue and reduced tolerance to effort. **Living well with a chronic pulmonary disease means getting moving to breathe better.**

**The objective** of this brochure is to motivate people with a chronic pulmonary disease and their family to increase their level of daily physical activity on a long-term basis.

## Why must we increase our level of physical activity?



### Being active helps you:

- better control your shortness of breath:  
*“When I exercise, it is easier to control my shortness of breath if I use the pursed-lip breathing technique.”*
- increase your strength and your tolerance to effort:  
*“I move more. I started with housework; I am now able to do the cleaning, the laundry and my meals.”*
- better control your anxiety:  
*“Feeling less breathless and being able to accomplish more makes me less anxious.”*
- increase your confidence in your own abilities:  
*“I have more self-confidence, I know that I can accomplish more and in the end I reap the benefits.”*
- improve your quality of life:  
*“My quality of life has improved because I am in better shape; I can accomplish more and I feel more useful.”*

## Recommendations:

Do some physical activity every day:

- walking indoors or outdoors
- pedaling a stationary bicycle with low to moderate resistance
- walking up stairs, taking time to rest when needed (3 or 4 steps at a time)
- participating in leisure activities (yoga, tai chi, ballroom dancing, bowling, shopping, etc.)
- engaging in daily life activities (housework, laundry, gardening, grocery shopping, walking to the convenience store instead of driving, preparing meals, etc.)

Time spent on physical activities can be spread out according to what is convenient for you: three 10-minute periods are just as good as a single 30-minute session.

### **Be active!**

It is recommended that you do 30 minutes of physical activity per day.

## Aim to maintain your level of physical activity for the long term

- If you enjoy outdoor activities, you should plan an activity for each season, such as cross-country skiing in the winter, gardening in the spring, cycling in the summer and hiking in the fall.
- Consider some indoor activities as well, which have the advantage of not depending on weather conditions (gym, stationary bicycle, swimming).
- Your level of performance can vary over time; what is most important is to be regularly active.

## What should you do when you have an aggravation of your COPD symptoms (exacerbation)?

- Reduce the intensity of your physical activity or stop it temporarily until your symptoms have improved.
- Use your action plan (if you have one) and contact your resource person.

Contact your doctor and/or healthcare professional if you are unable to resume your physical activities following an aggravation of your COPD symptoms (exacerbation).

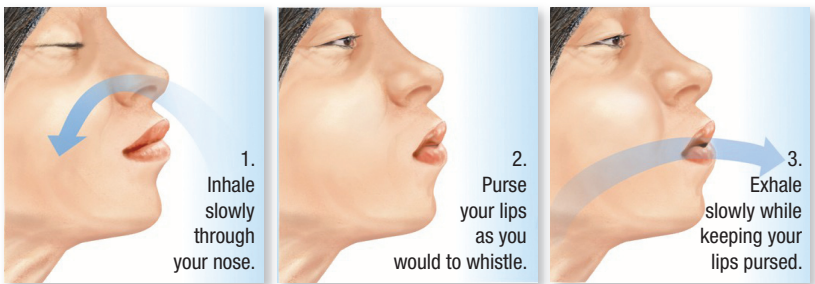
## Remember:

- Set aside moments of the day when you feel well to engage in physical activity.
- Avoid physical activity immediately after eating, or at night before going to bed.
- Wear comfortable clothes and appropriate shoes.
- Avoid environmental factors likely to increase your symptoms (e.g. extreme heat or cold, high humidity, smog or strong winds).
- Invite your friends and family to join you in physical activities.
- Take your medication as prescribed by your physician.
- Control your shortness of breath by using the pursed-lip breathing technique. If you are not familiar with this technique, ask your doctor or healthcare professional about it.

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### Pursed-lip breathing technique

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**Note:** Do not force your lungs to empty completely.

## How can you tell if the intensity of your physical activity is adequate?

Use the **Scale of perceived exertion** below. Looking at the scale, evaluate your level of breathlessness between 0-10. Then again, using the same scale, evaluate the intensity of your muscular fatigue.

### Scale of perceived exertion

Intensity of the sensation (breathlessness, fatigue)



0 Nothing at all

1 Very light

2 Light

3 Moderate

4 Somewhat severe

5 Severe

6 More severe

7 Very severe

8

9 Very, very severe

10 Maximal



Adapted from the Borg scale<sup>1</sup>

Start at a comfortable pace. It is normal to experience a light degree of breathlessness. It is recommended that you perform physical activity at a level of breathlessness and fatigue between **3 and 6 on a scale of 10**.

1. Borg, G. *Perceived exertion and pain scales*. Human Kinetics, Champaign (1998).

## What are the normal and abnormal symptoms that can be present during physical activity?

### Normal symptoms

- Light to moderate breathlessness
- Sweating
- Feeling of heat or fatigue in the legs
- Light muscular or joint pain

### Abnormal symptoms

If you present these symptoms, you should reduce or stop physical activity:

- Chest pain
- Intense joint pain
- Dizziness or vertigo
- Heart palpitations
- Severe and prolonged respiratory problems
- Headache

If you present any of these symptoms, you should stop physical activity temporarily and contact your doctor and/or health professional.



## Here are a few ways to help you increase your level of physical activity and monitor your progress.

### A) Use a pedometer.

The pedometer is a movement detector that counts every step you take. It should be clipped to your belt or waistband, midway between your navel and your hip (in line with your knee). This device will encourage you to go a bit further every day. Using it will allow you to challenge yourself and observe your progress.



### 3-step pedometer technique

- 1 In order to determine the average number of steps you take every day, note the number of steps you take over 3 consecutive days (making sure to include 1 weekend day).
- 2 Your first objective will be to add 1000 steps to your daily average. Maintain this level over a one-month period.
- 3 If you reach your goal, add another 1000 steps and maintain this for one month. Keep increasing your objective in this way until you have reached 5000 to 6000 steps per day. If your condition allows it, you can keep increasing up to 10,000 steps per day.

**Note:** There are many different types of pedometers on the market. Inquire carefully before making your purchase.

**B) Register at a gym or community centre, or join an aqua-fitness program.**

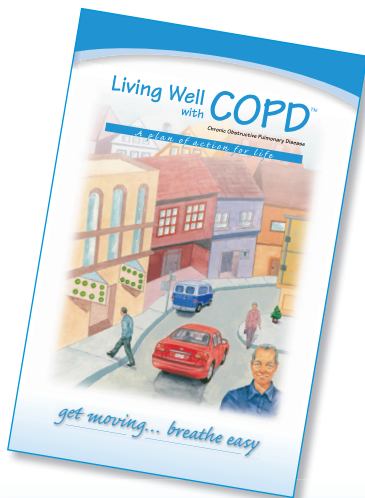
Gyms and community centres offer a variety of programs that could be suitable for you. Maybe you would like to engage in physical activity with friends or in a group. Inquire about programs available in your neighbourhood.



### C) Participate in a pulmonary rehabilitation program.

Pulmonary rehabilitation is a structured and supervised exercise program for people with a chronic pulmonary disease.

- If you are limited in your daily activities and you need support to start an exercise program, speak to your doctor or healthcare professional to be referred to a pulmonary rehabilitation specialist.
- Inquire about existing programs by consulting these websites:
  - [www.rqam.ca](http://www.rqam.ca), the Réseau québécois de l'asthme et de la MPOC
  - [www.pq.lung.ca](http://www.pq.lung.ca), the Québec Lung Association
  - [www.lung.ca](http://www.lung.ca), the Canadian Lung Association



**Let's see if you are ready to increase your level of physical activity.**

On a scale of 1 to 10, circle the number that best represents your ability to increase your level of physical activity on a regular, long-term basis.

1. Do you think you can increase your level of physical activity regularly (at least 3 times per week) over a one-month period?

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

*not at all confident*

*very confident*

2. Do you think you can increase your level of physical activity regularly (at least 3 times per week) over a one-year period?

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

*not at all confident*

*very confident*

3. Do you believe that if you increase your level of physical activity you will have better control of your shortness of breath and improve your quality of life?

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

*not at all confident*

*very confident*

**If you feel confident,** do not hesitate to engage in physical activities that are of interest to you, on a daily basis. Make a commitment now by completing and signing the following contract:

## Learning contract

1. Identify at least 3 physical activities you would like to engage in:

**Physical activity:** \_\_\_\_\_

At which time of day? \_\_\_\_\_

Min/day? \_\_\_\_\_ Times/week: \_\_\_\_\_

**Physical activity:** \_\_\_\_\_

At which time of day? \_\_\_\_\_

Min/day? \_\_\_\_\_ Times/week: \_\_\_\_\_

**Physical activity:** \_\_\_\_\_

At which time of day? \_\_\_\_\_

Min/day? \_\_\_\_\_ Times/week: \_\_\_\_\_

2. If I use a pedometer, I will increase the number of steps I take each day by \_\_\_\_\_ and will maintain this level for **the next month**.

3. Here is my plan for maintaining my physical activities in the long-term: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Your signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of a friend or family member: \_\_\_\_\_

The next time you see your doctor, do not hesitate to show him or her this contract.

You may find yourself unable to increase your level of physical activity despite having used the recommendations made in this brochure. If that is the case, speak to your doctor or other resource persons to discuss the things that keep you from being more active.

### To summarize:

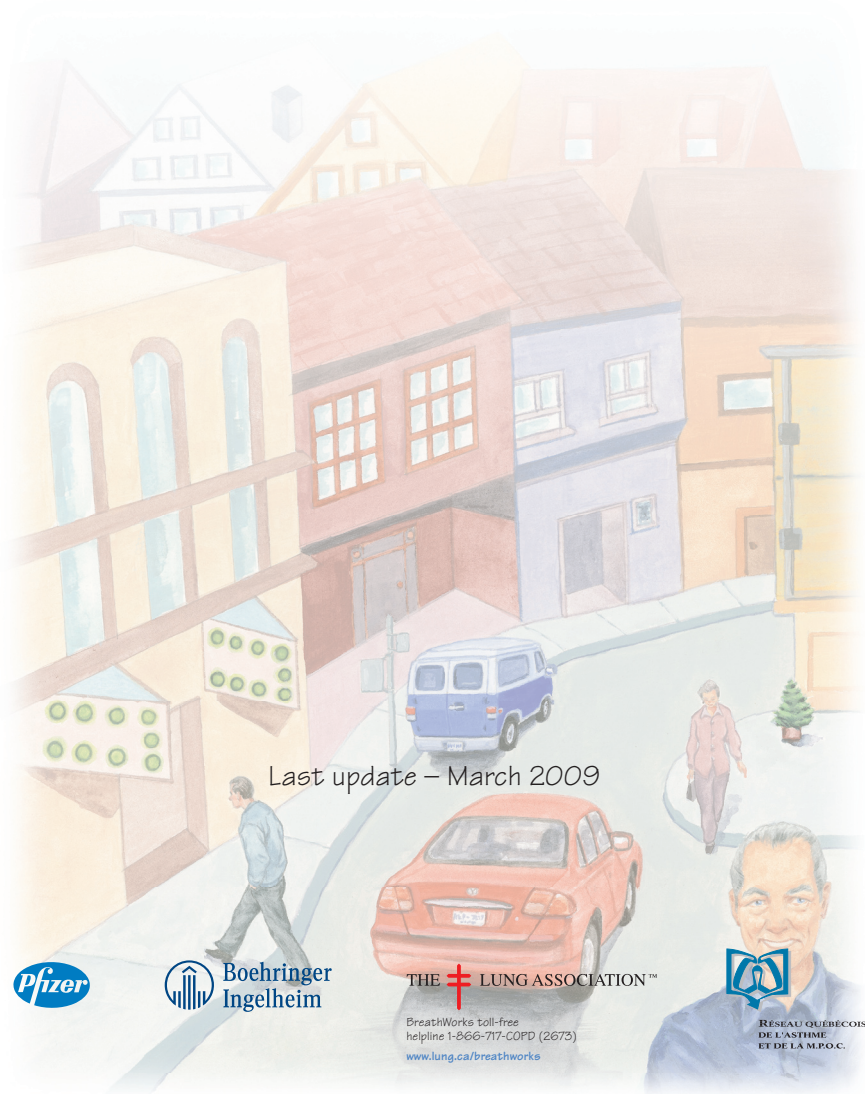
- Be physically active on a daily basis.
- By being more active, you will have better control of your shortness of breath, be able to accomplish more, and increase your quality of life.

There are other alternatives, such as **being referred to a pulmonary rehabilitation program**, where you would be supervised by a team of healthcare professionals who would guide you in the practice of exercises adapted to your health condition. Discuss this with your physician or healthcare professional.

Keep a positive outlook on life. Be creative, try something different and reward yourself. Your body and spirit will be grateful. Have fun!

*get moving... breathe easy!*





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BreathWorks toll-free  
helpline 1-866-717-COPD (2673)  
[www.lung.ca/breathworks](http://www.lung.ca/breathworks)



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