

Lung Defence Unit Physiotherapy Service

A patient's guide



The Physiotherapy Service

A team of physiotherapists is involved in providing care to inpatients and outpatients looked after by the Lung Defence Service.

Patients with bronchiectasis, COPD, asthma and a range of other lung conditions may benefit from seeing a physiotherapist who can provide advice and support to help manage these conditions.

The physiotherapy team are skilled in a number of different areas - one or more of which may apply to you. This leaflet explains the different ways in which physiotherapy may be able to help you.

How can physiotherapy help me?

Chest clearance

If you produce sputum, either on a regular basis or just during infections, it is vital that you are instructed in how best to clear your chest. If sputum is allowed to build up in your lungs it encourages infection and inflammation. This can cause damage to the breathing tubes making your existing condition worse.

Undertaking regular physiotherapy should help to keep your lungs clearer so that you cough less and are less breathless.

There are several different methods that you can be taught to help clear the secretions from your chest. A physiotherapist will need to fully assess you before selecting which technique is the best one for you. This will depend on several things including what chest problem you have, how much sputum you produce and what areas of your lungs are affected.

You should be reviewed regularly to ensure that you can clear your chest effectively when you are well *and* if you have an infection.

Exercise advice

Although chest conditions can make you feel tired and breathless, regular exercise is very important. In fact, a loss of physical fitness and muscle strength often makes people feel more breathless and fatigued in everyday life.

The physiotherapist will be able to advise you about how much and how often to exercise. We may suggest referring you to a Pulmonary Rehabilitation service that provides exercise and education classes.

If you feel unsteady or unsafe when walking, or you feel that your legs or arms are weak, the physiotherapist will be able to assess what help you need. For example, you may need a walking aid or gentle strengthening and balance exercises. We may also suggest referring you to see an Occupational Therapist who can provide advice and equipment to help you at home.

Management of breathlessness

Breathlessness is a very common problem in people with chest conditions. You may be affected at rest or only when you are active. Although breathlessness is a normal response to exercise, when you already have breathing difficulties it can become distressing and very limiting.

The physiotherapist will be able to teach you breathing and pacing techniques to help you control your breathing. You can also be shown positions to use when breathless to help you relax and recover. As being breathless is very tiring, the physiotherapist can also discuss techniques to help you conserve energy.

Oxygen assessments

Some patients require oxygen to help them get out and about and be as active as possible. If you need oxygen, a physiotherapist will assess you. This usually involves having your oxygen levels measured when you walk, both with and without oxygen.

Nebuliser therapy

Some patients need medication that is inhaled using a machine called a nebuliser. If you need to use this type of medication, a physiotherapist is usually involved in teaching you how to take it.

How do I access the Physiotherapy Service?

All patients attending the Lung Defence Service are able to see a physiotherapist during outpatient and inpatient visits. If you wish to see the physiotherapist please ask.

If you wish to speak to a member of the Physiotherapy team please telephone:

01480 364215 between 08.30 and 16.30 Monday to Friday.

Papworth Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Papworth Everard

Cambridge

CB23 3RE

Telephone: 01480 830541

Fax: 01480 831315

www.papworthhospital.nhs.uk

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