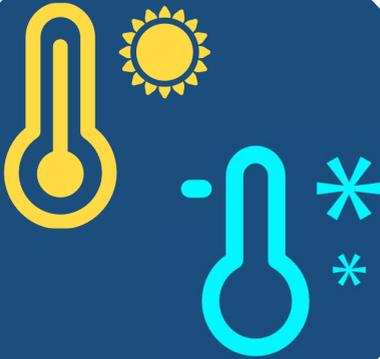


Looking after your lungs in hot and cold weather

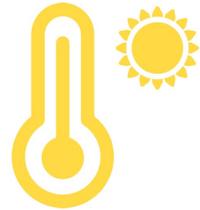


Your local
healthcare
provider

Looking after your lungs in hot and cold weather

Living with a lung condition your symptoms may vary from day to day. People with lung conditions usually experience a flare up of symptoms when there is a change in temperature. Whether it's a heat wave or a cold front it is important that you know how to look after yourself and how to reduce flare ups. In this leaflet you will find some advice on how to look after your lungs in extreme weather conditions.

Looking after your lungs in hot weather



It is important when you have a lung condition to look after yourself in weather extremes. It is best for your health to avoid either getting too hot or too cold. The heat can affect anyone, but some people run a greater risk of serious harm. These include:

- Older people, especially older women and those over 75.
- Babies and young children.
- People with serious mental health problems.
- People on certain medication.
- People with a serious chronic condition, particularly breathing or heart problems.
- People who already have a high temperature from an infection.
- People who misuse alcohol or take illicit drugs.
- People with mobility problems.
- People who are physically active, like manual workers and sportsmen and women.

To avoid any serious harm here are some tips on how to keep yourself and others cool.

Avoid the heat

If a heatwave is forecast, try and plan your day in a way that allows you to stay out of the heat.

If you can, avoid going out in the hottest part of the day (11am – 3pm).

If you can't avoid strenuous outdoor activity, like sport, DIY or gardening, keep it for cooler parts of the day, like early morning or evening.

If you must go out, stay in the shade. Wear a hat and light, loose-fitting clothes, preferably cotton. If you will be outside for some time, take plenty of water with you, any medication you may need. It may also be a good idea to use a hand held fan.

Certain antibiotics and medications can make you more sensitive to sunlight. Make sure you always read and check the medication information leaflet to find out if you are on one of these medications. If you're taking one of these medications, you'll burn more quickly, so make sure you cover up and wear high factor sun cream.

Keeping cool inside

Stay inside, in the coolest rooms in your home, as much as possible.

Reduce heat from sunlight coming through the windows. External shading, e.g. shutters, is best. Metal blinds and dark curtains may absorb heat and make the room warmer – it is best to use pale curtains or reflective material.

Keep windows closed while the room is cooler than it is outside. Open them when the temperature inside rises, and at night for ventilation.





If you are worried about security, at least open windows on the first floor and above.

Indoor and outdoor plants will help keep your home cool due to evaporation and the shading from trees and bushes.

Have cool showers or baths, put a loose, cotton, damp cloth or scarf on the back of the neck, spray or splash your face with cold water frequently to help keep your body cool.

Exercise sensibly

Exercise is very beneficial especially for people with a lung condition. However when you exercise you can overheat. Therefore in hot weather it may be a good idea to avoid strenuous exercise. If you do exercise try to do this in a cool, well ventilated room.

Drink regularly

Drink regularly even if you do not feel thirsty – water or fruit juice are best.

Have plenty of cold drinks, avoid excess alcohol, caffeine and hot drinks Drink regularly even if you do not feel thirsty – water or fruit juice are best. Have plenty of cold drinks, avoid excess alcohol, caffeine and hot drinks

Eat light meals with a higher proportion of vegetables. Try to eat more cold food, particularly salads and fruit, which contain water.

Seek advice if you have any concerns

If you, or somebody you know, find your home to be uncomfortably hot and you have concerns about it affecting

yours or someone else's health, seek medical advice about the person and from the environmental health department within your local authority about the home.

Contact your doctor, a pharmacist or NHS Direct if you are worried about your health during a heatwave, especially if you are taking medication, if you feel unwell or have any unusual symptoms.

Watch for cramp in your arms, legs or stomach, feelings of mild confusion, weakness or problems sleeping.

If you have these symptoms, rest for several hours, keep cool and drink water or fruit juice. Seek medical advice if they get worse or don't go away.

Remember, heatstroke can kill. It can develop very suddenly, and rapidly lead to unconsciousness. If you suspect someone has heatstroke, call 999 immediately.

If you do have to call 999 you must:

- Try If possible, to move the person somewhere cooler.
- Increase ventilation by opening windows or using a fan.
- Cool them down as quickly as possibly by loosening their clothes, sprinkling them with cold water, wrapping them in a damp sheet or fanning them when their skin is moist.
- If they are conscious, give them water or fruit juice to drink. Do not give aspirin or paracetamol.

References:

DOH (2010) Looking after yourself and others during hot weather
British Lung Foundation (2016) Looking after your lungs in hot weather
Public health England (2016) Beat the heat: staying safe in hot weather



Looking after your lungs in cold weather



It is very important to look after yourself when it is cold. A cold home can have a huge impact on a person's health. You are more vulnerable if:

- you're over 65
- you're on a low income (so can't afford heating)
- you have a long-term health condition, such as heart, lung or kidney disease
you are disabled

Therefore it is very important if you have a long term lung condition to stay warm. Below are some tips on how you can keep yourself warm and healthy during winter.

Keeping your home warm

It is advised that if you are over 65, or have reduced mobility, or have a long term health condition your home should be heated to at least 18°C, especially in your bedroom overnight. You may wish to keep your house warmer during the day if it is more comfortable for you.

Staying warm

Whether you're inside or outside it's important to wrap up warm. Try wearing layers instead of one bulky layer as this traps warm air. Wearing thermal underwear can also be very useful. People with Lung conditions tend to find it useful to wear a scarf over their nose and mouth as this warms up the air that they breathe in. Breathing in cold air can make you more at risk of a chest infection. If it is a particularly cold day it is best to stay inside.

Exercise

Exercise is very important for people with lung conditions, especially when it is cold. When you exercise it generates body heat which will help you to keep warm. Try to avoid sitting for more than hour. You can even try doing some chair based exercises if you are not feeling well or feel too breathless to keep getting up.

Eating well

Eating the right foods can contribute to a healthy immune system. Therefore during the winter it is vital to maintain a healthy balanced diet. Try to make sure you have hot food and drinks throughout the day.

Medications

Make sure you have an adequate supply of regular medication to last at least a further week.

Flu is a highly infectious disease that is thought to contribute to many winter deaths. Therefore speak to your GP about receiving a free flu jab as well as a **one-off anti-pneumonia vaccination** too.

References:

British Lung Foundation (2015) Keeping well in the cold: what you can do, NHS choices (2014) Keep warm, keep well



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