



Live Well to Breathe Well

When you think about having healthy lungs, the first thing that comes to mind is often exercise. Daily essentials like a healthy diet, hydration and relaxation also improve lung health.



Eat Well

Research shows salty snacks, sweet treats and sugary drinks actually make our lungs work harder. Salt can cause dehydration and water retention, making it difficult to inhale and oxygenate the blood. Sugar increases carbon dioxide levels in the blood and the lungs work harder to exhale. Try these foods proven to benefit lung health:



- Antioxidant-rich fruits and vegetables
- Lean protein like fish, chicken, turkey or tofu
- Unsaturated fats found in plants and seafood. Look for these healthy fats on nutrition facts labels:
 - *Monounsaturated fats* found in liquid plant-based oils (olive, canola, vegetable) as well as nuts and seeds
 - *Polyunsaturated fatty acids* (Omega-3 or Omega-6) found in fish, nuts, whole grains and seeds

Be Active

Strengthen your lungs by building up to 30 minutes of daily aerobic exercise which provides positive effects for your heart, lungs and blood flow. Be sure to visit your primary care physician before starting an exercise program and update your Health Action Plan to set goals and track your progress:

- Add an aerobic exercise to your daily routine like walking, running, swimming or biking.
- Start slowly with short intervals of exercise throughout the day and build up to 30 minutes a day.

Stay Hydrated

Staying hydrated throughout the day is important for lung health because it prevents dehydration and makes it easier to circulate oxygen throughout the body. Drinking enough water is important for people with lung conditions because it thins the mucous lining in airways, making it easier to breathe. Make it a daily habit to drink:

- At least eight servings of water each day (eight ounces is considered one serving)
- Before, during and after exercise
- A glass of water or a calorie-free/low-calorie beverage with each meal and between each meal

Feel Good

Who knew taking moments to yourself could help your lung health? Try these feel-good techniques to take a step toward better lung health:

- **Practice deep breathing exercises** to improve the elasticity of the lungs.
- Work on your upright posture to make space for your lungs to healthily expand.
- Laugh more! Not only does it feel good, it pushes out stale air, brings more oxygen into the lungs and strengthens abdominal muscles.
- Dance! It's a fun way to exercise.



Be Well to Breathe Well

just
breathe

Healthy air and bodies are critical for everyone's lung health and people with respiratory diseases and chronic conditions can lead a longer fuller life by developing a treatment plan with their primary care physician (PCP).



Breathe Healthier Air

Lung irritants in the air we breathe can trigger serious breathing problems for people with breathing difficulties and we can all benefit by improving the quality of the air we breathe at work and home:

- Avoid smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke.
- Change air filters regularly.
- Clean and vacuum regularly to remove mold and allergens like pollen, pet fur, dander and dust.
- Avoid exposure to fumes and strong odors from synthetic fragrances, cleaning agents and paint.
- Consider using products with essential oils instead of synthetic fragrances found in personal care products, detergents and air diffusers.
- Use natural cleansers like dish soap, vinegar and baking soda instead of harsh chemical products.

Prevent Respiratory Illnesses

Respiratory illness can have serious consequences for people with a lung disease or chronic condition. Be sure to:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer when you don't have access to a sink
- Talk to your PCP about the benefits of flu shots or pneumonia vaccines
- Stay home when you have a respiratory infection or the flu

See Your PCP

Breathing difficulties can quickly escalate to medical emergencies and it's important to have a treatment plan to act fast. Learn to recognize the signs and symptoms of breathing difficulties to know what to do. See your PCP if you or a family member experience:

- Shortness of breath during simple activities
- Pain when breathing
- Dizziness with a change in activity
- A persistent cough
- Wheezing with exercise
- Cough associated with exercising or pain in the airway

Develop and Follow a Treatment Plan

It is possible to breathe well and lead a longer and fuller life by developing a treatment plan with a PCP:

- Make the most of your doctor visit by preparing to answer questions about your symptoms, health history, triggers for breathing difficulties, current medications and treatment plans.
- Your doctor may ask you to blow into a simple machine called a spirometer to evaluate your lung strength and could order a chest X-ray or other tests to learn how well your lungs are working.
- If you or a family member are diagnosed with asthma, ask your doctor for a written [asthma action plan](#) to learn how to identify and manage symptoms before they escalate to a medical emergency.
- Ask for a demonstration to learn how to use devices and take medications correctly.
- Contact your doctor if your treatment plan is not making it easier to breathe.

SAVE THE DATE

Cook County Health Fairs
coming to a site near you,
May 14-29