



TAKING CARE OF YOUR MENTAL HEALTH LIVING WITH A LUNG CONDITION

The physical challenges of managing a lung condition can sometimes affect your mood and emotional health. Many people living with a lung condition experience feelings of sadness, fear, and worry.

This is common and normal when coping with a change in health and might be because:

- you find it harder to do the same activities that you did before
- you worry that you will not be able to breathe
- you feel frustrated if you now need regular medical treatment and more support from others
- you worry about your future and what life will be like with your lung condition

Having a mental health condition may also affect your ability to cope with your lung condition. This might mean:

- you feel anxious about being short of breath, so you avoid exercise
- you feel depressed and unable to take your medication
- you avoid social situations and feel isolated

If these feelings don't go away after a few weeks, or they start to affect your ability to keep up with normal activities and enjoy life, then you may be experiencing symptoms of anxiety or depression.



ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION

Anxiety refers to a constant worrying and expecting the worst to happen. Anxiety may make it hard to function and may cause what can be known as a panic attack. A panic attack is a sudden episode of intense fear or anxiety.

Panic attacks and anxiety can also cause you to have shortness of breath or change your normal breathing pattern. When this happens, you may become trapped in a cycle when your shortness of breath triggers anxiety - making it more difficult to breathe.

Depression is a feeling of deep sadness or emptiness that lasts longer than a couple of weeks. Depression can affect your ability to enjoy your work, recreation, family and friends. Like other illness, depression can be a serious illness that affects more than just your mood. If left untreated, it may greatly affect your ability to stay active and enjoy your life.

WHAT CAN I DO TO LOOK AFTER MY MENTAL HEALTH?

Looking after your mental health is personal. There is not just one way to support your mental wellbeing. You can try many different things, so it is important to find something that works for you.



Stay Active

Staying active when you have a lung condition can help manage your symptoms and keep you feeling well. The more active you are, the easier you will find doing your daily activities. It is important to find an activity that matches your level of shortness of breath. Feeling some shortness of breath during activities is normal and is not a sign that your lung condition is flaring up.

(See [Exercise for Lung Health](#) for more information).



Eat and Drink Well

Eating healthy is an important part of overall health. However, different lung conditions, treatments, symptoms, and side effects from medications, may affect the body in ways that require special nutritional needs. Eat a variety of healthy foods each day and make water your drink of choice. (See [Eating Well for Lung Health](#) for more information).



Be Mindful

Mindfulness means focusing on the present moment. Mindfulness teaches us that an emotion or feeling is a normal reaction to something, but that you can respond to this feeling in different ways. Mindfulness helps you understand that some thoughts and feelings might be positive and some negative, and that this is normal. When you feel stressed or anxious, you may respond to thoughts too quickly. Take some time and ask yourself if there are other ways in which you can think about a situation. You can break an unhelpful cycle of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours.



Sleep Well

Set a regular bedtime for yourself and a regular routine before going to sleep. Not sleeping well can make you feel tired, irritable, anxious, and depressed. If sleep is an ongoing problem for you, consider speaking to your health care provider.



Be Social

Getting out to catch up with friends and family can help and if you can't get out, thinking about setting up a time to call for a chat. Don't be afraid to ask for help from a family member, friend, or professional. Accepting help from others can help you cope. Consider joining a patient support group. For more information about Lung Sask Support groups visit [Support Groups](#).



Learn

Learn about your lung condition. Knowing more about your symptoms, things that could trigger a worsening of your symptoms, and what to do when your symptoms worsen, can help manage your stress and anxiety. For more information about lung conditions visit [Lungs](#).



Focus on Things You Can Control

Focus on the things you can do rather than the things that you can't, and focus on the things that you can change rather than the things you can't change. This can lead to positive feelings of hope and a more positive outlook on life.



Relax

Take time for yourself to relax and plan for it. Relaxation can be formal like, deep breathing exercises or muscle relaxation, or informal like watching TV, listening to music, or reading.

WHAT TREATMENTS ARE THERE FOR MENTAL HEALTH?

Everyone is different and will have different needs. Talk with your health care provider to discuss what treatments for mental health conditions for people with lung disease might be available and right for you. Some examples include:

- **Pulmonary Rehabilitation**

- Pulmonary rehabilitation is a program that includes exercise and education for people living with a lung condition. Pulmonary rehabilitation can be very effective in improving your mental and physical health.

- **Talking Therapies**

- Talking with a counsellor can help overcome specific fears as well as help with depression and anxiety.

- **Medication**

- Medications such as antidepressants or anxiolytics (for anxiety) are treatment options that might help. Your health care provider will work with you to find out if this is right for you, and to find the right medication for you.

WHERE CAN I FIND SUPPORT?

Lung Saskatchewan offers [support groups](#) for people living with lung conditions. You may find that becoming actively involved with a support group connects you with people that share similar experiences to you.

The Government of Saskatchewan has a number of mental health supports available for Saskatchewan residents. Visit [Mental Health Services](#) to find out more.

OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES

Watch this Video:

[The Power of Breathing: Utilizing the BradCliff Method](#)

Read this Toolkit:

[Mental Health Resource Toolkit](#)