

PRESS RELEASE

Immediate release: 7 June 2015

Don't let the warmer weather take your breath away

Most of us love the summer months. It helps to improve our mood and gives us a feeling of wellbeing. After all, who doesn't feel good ditching those winter woollies for a nice bright summer wardrobe?

But, if you're one of the 900,000 people in the UK living with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), it's not such a pleasant time. Heat, humidity and sudden changes in weather can make it harder to breathe and trigger symptoms, such as shortness of breath, coughing, and wheezing.

So, if you or one of your loved ones is affected by COPD it's important to know how to manage symptoms in the warmer months by following basic precautions.

Dr Anjan Bose, NHS Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group's (CCG) Health and Wellbeing Clinical Lead, said: "During the heat of summer, the body has to use extra energy to try and cool itself down in order to maintain a normal body temperature. This extra energy causes the body to demand more oxygen.

"If you have COPD, you're already using much of your energy just to breathe, not to mention everything else that you do during the day. So, it's not uncommon to experience a greater level of shortness of breath when you're exposed to extreme temperatures, as your body is forced to use more energy while it struggles to maintain your body temperature.

"Many plants and allergens can make COPD worse. So, be aware of what affects you and talk to your doctor about selecting allergy medications or inhalers that will best support your breathing in the summer heat. COPD shouldn't prevent you from enjoying all that summer has to offer."

These basic precautions can help manage your condition:

- 1. Take your medication.** It's important to take your medication as prescribed, even if you start to feel better. Continuous medication can help prevent flare-ups. If you have questions or concerns about the medication you're taking or side effects, talk to your healthcare team.

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2. **Get support from family and friends.** If you live alone, make arrangements with family or friends to check on you regularly during extreme temperatures.
3. **Check the weather forecast.** Regularly check the met office's weather forecast and Heat-Health watch – www.metoffice.gov.uk , which operates in England from 1 June to 15 September each year. Then plan your activities during times when the weather is not as hot.
4. **Protect yourself.** The aim is to keep your body cool so make sure you do not burn when you are in the sun – always use a sun screen that protects against UVA and UVB rays.
5. **Stay hydrated.** Drink at least eight glasses of water a day and eat more cold food, particularly salads and fruit which contain water.
6. **Plan your day.** Plan your day in a way that allows you to stay out of the heat. If possible, avoid going out in the hottest part of the day (between 11am and 3pm).
7. **Stay cool.** Stay in the coolest rooms in your home as much as possible. Keep windows closed while the room is cooler than outside of the house. Open them when the temperature inside rises, and close the curtains in rooms that are in the full glare of the sun. Also remember to open windows at night for ventilation. If you are worried about security, only open windows on the first floor and above, or fit security locks that allow windows to be locked in an open position for ventilation.
8. **Have regular showers or baths.** Splash yourself several times a day with cold water, particularly on your face and the back of your neck.

Finally, remaining active is crucial to maintaining a healthy, positive lifestyle and may reduce shortness of breath. So if the summer months require you to stay indoors on days that are too hot or humid, find alternative ways to stay active.

For more information about living with COPD, visit www.nhs.uk

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Picture caption: Help to manage COPD in the warmer weather.

Note to editors

- Figures sourced from <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/chronic-obstructive-pulmonary-disease/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

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