



Supporting someone  
with breathlessness



## Managing infections

Stopping infections from happening can be hard. Infections and flare-ups will happen and some patients get them more easily than others. However, there are some things that can help.

Above all, it is important not to let fear of infection stop you both from **keeping active** and **living a fulfilling life**. Keeping fit and active are especially important in getting better after infections – the fitter the patient is, the quicker they can recover.

### Have you tried...?

#### How to manage an infection

- Be alert to changes in symptoms and signs of infection. These may need to be treated quickly. Don't just assume it's the illness getting worse
- Ask your GP, practice nurse or specialist nurse if the patient needs a tailored self-management plan
- Follow the patient's self-management plan if they have one, taking emergency/rescue medication if needed
- Let the patient's GP know if the patient has used their emergency medication
- Talk with your healthcare team in advance, about who to contact if you are concerned or if you have tried everything else
- Also talk with your healthcare team in advance to make an 'out of hours' plan
- Keep useful telephone numbers written down and handy e.g. GP, specialist nurse, taxi services, neighbours, family and friends
- If the patient uses an inhaler, ensure they have an annual inhaler check/review



## What you can do to help the patient

- Be aware of what the patient is like **when they don't have an infection or flare up**
- Encourage the patient to **attend a rehabilitation course** – this is one of the best things you can do. Ask your healthcare team for more information about groups that may be available locally
- Make sure you and the patient **have your annual flu vaccinations and one-off anti-pneumococcal vaccination**
- You should both remember to **wash your hands with hot water and soap, or use hand gel**. Also try not to touch your eyes and nose
- Eat a healthy diet** with plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables, and drink warm drinks in winter months
- Keep active** – take regular exercise
- Although it can feel difficult at times, it is important to **say no to seeing people with coughs, colds or fever**. Even one infection can be quite serious for the patient
- Try **not to breathe in any kind of smoke**

## Have a look at our videos

There are two videos for this support topic over on the website that you may find useful:

- **'Managing infections in cancer'** and **'Managing infections in COPD'** where you can learn from Dr Ravi Mahadeva, Consultant, and some carers about the signs of infection to look out for in these illnesses, and how to manage and prevent infections.

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