

## The Weather and Your Health

The severity of your symptoms may change throughout the year because of a change in weather conditions.

Keeping an eye on the weather forecast is an important part of managing your condition.

Hot and cold weather alerts can be found on the Met Office website but will also be mentioned on TV and radio weather forecasts.

A cold alert will be put out if the temperature is expected below 2 degrees for 48 hours or heavy snow / ice. Research shows strong link between cold weather and increased hospital admissions.

The UK is high up the European league for additional winter mortality, there is an **18%** increase in preventable deaths in winter.

**This means that we need to be better prepared for extreme temperatures:**

- Plan ahead for shopping
- Ensure your medications and rescue packs are stocked
- Ensure you have sufficient heating (gas/electric)
- Monitor indoor temperatures
  - ★ **Bedroom = 18°C**
  - ★ **Living room = 21°C**

### Why you may be at risk during the winter?

- **Cold air** can cause narrowing of airways, leading to increase in breathlessness.
- **Windy days** can make you feel more short of breath
- Extreme temperatures may mean your infections/exacerbations take longer to recover.
- It is important to act quickly and get treatment early.
- If you are not improving go back for another GP review.
- Higher risk of hospital admissions – especially if you have never been admitted before.

### ❄️ Protecting yourself in the winter ❄️

- Keep warm! Wear several layers, this traps warm air better than one bulky layer.
  - ★ Wrap a scarf loosely over your nose and mouth to reduce the effect of cold air on the airways



- Take your reliever inhaler 30 minutes before going out or planned activity
- Reduce the number of trips outdoors when it's very cold (less than 4 degrees)
- If you start to shiver when you're outside, keep moving or return inside
- When indoors try not to sit down for more than one hour, get up and move around regularly.
- Wear non-slip footwear
- Have regular warm meals and hot drinks



### Protecting yourself in the summer

- Observe forecast for high temperatures, humidity and pollen counts.
- Wear loose cotton clothing and try to stay cool.
- Open windows regularly – be mindful that outdoor pollutants and pollen are likely to enter the house
- During a heat wave avoid going out in between 11am and 3pm, plan your day around this.
- Use a fan.
- Take cool showers or baths.
- Drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration.
- Keep inhalers out of direct sunlight.

### How can I protect my health and help avoid infections?

*Think of these things all year round:*

- **Stop smoking**- the most important thing you do to help your breathing regardless of the weather.
  - ★ Sources of support – GP, Practise Nurse, Smoke Free Liverpool
- Ensure you do not run out of your medications, inhalers and rescue packs. Ask your GP about a rescue pack if you have frequent exacerbations/flare ups
- Eat a healthy, nutritious **diet** to boost your immune system and maintain a healthy weight
- Drink plenty of **fluid** to keep hydrated- 6-8 glasses / 1.5-2 litres per day
- Tell your GP if you are feeling **anxious or depressed** as this impacts on your health
- Being **physically active** can almost halve the risk of you having to go into hospital
- Yearly **flu injection**
- **Liverpool Healthy Homes**
  - ★ The Healthy Homes team provide free help and advice to local people who are struggling to pay their energy bills and heat their homes. Telephone number: 0800 0121 754
- **The Breathe Programme / Pulmonary Rehabilitation- You can attend twice a year!**