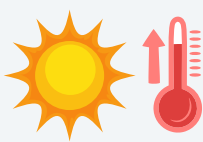


Supporting people with respiratory conditions during extreme weather



The UK is now exposed to more extreme weather conditions than ever before:



Hot weather and heatwaves



Droughts and risk of wildfires



Periods of heavy rain and flash flooding



Increased pollution and pollen levels

All of these put the health and wellbeing of people with respiratory conditions at risk.

For people with chronic lung conditions such as COPD, asthma, bronchiectasis and pulmonary fibrosis, or other severe chronic respiratory disease, extreme weather can worsen symptoms because heat, humidity, dehydration, home conditions, higher ozone pollution, and pollen levels all place extra stress on the lungs and can increase breathlessness, coughing, wheezing, and exacerbations.



People with respiratory conditions should always have:

- ☒ An up-to-date respiratory action plan.
- ☒ Optimised medication, including inhaler use and technique.
- ☒ All prevention measures in place (vaccinations, smoking cessation etc).
- ☒ Knowledge of carrying their reliever medication all the time, even when away from home.
- ☒ Confidence in monitoring their own symptoms and seeking medical advice early if they worsen. **They should know to seek urgent medical attention if they experience severe breathlessness, worsening wheezing, chest pain, blue lips/fingers, or their reliever medication is not helping.**
- ☒ Advice on where to check local weather, air quality, and pollen forecasts and what action to take if pollution and/or pollen levels are high.
- ☒ Advice on staying hydrated, fed and well rested.

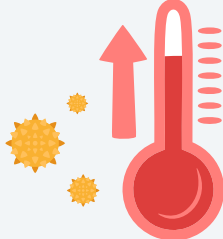


The greenest inhaler is the one the individual will use effectively

Hot weather, heatwaves and hay fever seasons

Provide advice on:

- Staying cool, hydrated and avoiding overheating.
- Monitoring air quality and pollen forecasts and avoid strenuous outdoor activity when pollution and/or pollen levels are high.
- Protecting themselves if pollution and/or pollen levels are high and they need to go outdoors.
- Adjusting physical activity, exercising early in the morning or later in the evening when it's cooler and considering room/air-temperature and humidity. A Wet Bulb Globe Temperature chart (such as [this one from Sports Medicine Australia](#)) can be used to inform decisions about exercising safely when it is hot and/or humid.
- Reducing activity levels if you notice increasing breathlessness, wheezing, or coughing.
- Following their respiratory action plan, taking their medication as prescribed, and keeping their rescue medication accessible at all times.
- Seeking advice if symptoms worsen.



During wildfire smoke, dust, or poor air quality events

Provide advice on:

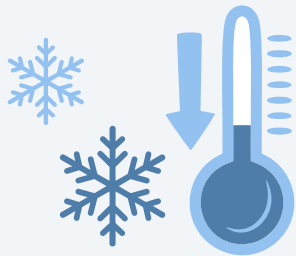
- Staying indoors as much as possible.
- Monitoring air quality alerts.
- Considering respiratory protection (masks, respirators etc).
- Seeking help early.



Cold Weather

Provide advice on:

- Breathing techniques to warm air before breathing it in.
- Keeping warm and their house adequately heated.
- What action to take if mould and mildew are building up in the home.
- Watching for signs and symptoms of infections.
- Adjustments to exercise including consideration of conditions (air-temperature and humidity) if exercising outside.
- Keeping to their respiratory action plan and medication, particularly reliever medication accessible at all times.
- Seeking advice if symptoms worsen.



Other things to consider:

- ☒ Use simple advice such as, “Keep cool, keep hydrated, keep medications close by, monitor air quality and pace yourself.”
- ☒ Keeping windows and doors closed during periods of poor outdoor air quality where appropriate.
- ☒ Making sure they know to keep enough medication (e.g. ensuring repeat prescriptions are ordered early), food and provisions available at home if extreme weather conditions are forecast and they may not be able to leave the house.
- ☒ Seeking support from local community initiatives such as Warm Spaces, Community Hubs and Foodbanks.
- ☒ Having emergency contact numbers and details accessible at all times – this should include family and friends, their local healthcare professional, as well as the emergency services if necessary.
- ☒ Patients experiencing breathlessness during extremes of climate can use pursed-lip breathing, practice breath control, use handheld fans to direct cool air across nose and mouth. Advise patients to break tasks into small steps and sit down for activities when possible.
- ☒ Ensuring people who use home oxygen know what to do during power outages or extreme weather disruptions.

PCRS resources

-  [Greener respiratory healthcare](#)
-  [COPD resources](#)

-  [Asthma resources](#)
-  [Health inequalities](#)

We are grateful to Chiesi Ltd for the provision of a grant to support the activities of the PCRS Greener Respiratory Healthcare campaign. The campaign has been solely organised by PCRS and Chiesi Ltd has had no input in the content.



This resource is part of the PCRS Greener Healthcare Initiative - learn more on the PCRS website: www.pcrs-uk.org