

TAKE A BREATH



Stay active
this winter



Keep your-
self well
over the
winter



Find out
about
support
groups



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A week in the life of a highland respiratory specialist nurse....



As a COPD nurse in North and West Highland I can clock up many miles in the course of the week! Luckily for me, these can be some of the most scenic miles in the world!

My job involves supporting people with COPD to keep as well as possible. Although I am based in Dingwall my week begins in Wester Ross. I visit a man with a severe lung condition at home, catch up with the Practice Nurse and visit a care home to meet with the staff. We talk about the symptoms of lung disease and all agree that breathlessness is scary. We need to understand this to be able to help people to manage it.

On Tuesday I'm back in Dingwall working on developing new nursing roles. These will have a special focus on COPD. This is important because we know that keeping well and being able to stay at home safely is sometimes better than being admitted to hospital. Later there's a group discussion about how technology can help with COPD. As part of a 'Living

it Up' project, people in some areas of the Highlands are monitoring their condition at home using simple medical devices. With support this can help some people to manage their condition better. Some places already offer consultations with specialist healthcare professionals using video links. This is done from their local health centre. We'd like to find ways to make this work right across the highlands.

On Wednesday I'm seeing people in their homes in Caithness. Most of these people have had a recent hospital admission because of COPD. We talk about what COPD is and how it affects them. I find that people don't always know what COPD actually is or why it's affecting them the way it does. CHSS provide lots of useful information and

you can call their Advice Line Nurses to find out more or ask for some leaflets. Checking how people take their inhalers is always useful. Having the correct 'technique' is so important to get the best out of them. Some people can find this strange, especially if they've been taking inhalers for a long time, but you'd be surprised how many of them need to make some changes!

When was the last time you had your 'inhaler technique' checked?

On Thursday I spend time with a group of GPs, community nurses and other health care staff looking at how we support people to keep as well as possible. This is one of the most important parts of my role as it helps when the whole team does the things that we know work best.

At the end of the week I'm back at my desk in Dingwall. My week has been busy, sometimes challenging but always rewarding. The drive has usually been a bit of a safari and on my travels I've spotted eagles, deer, wild goats and even an otter calmly crossing the road.

I look forward to spending time with my family at home, ready to do it all again on Monday.

For more information about Living it Up go to www.livingitup.org.uk

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Being active in the winter

We all find it difficult to stick to our good habits over the winter. When it is cold and dark outside the sofa can be very appealing making it harder to stay active. But try not to give in, some studies have found that being active can boost your immune system, helping you to fight coughs and colds.

Being active also improves your mood and can help to fight those winter blues. A change in the weather can be a good excuse to try something new! Why not try some indoor activities:

- Swimming
- Yoga
- Tai chi
- Or a sport, like table tennis or badminton, where you can decide how energetic you want to be!

If you don't fancy leaving the house there are many exercise DVDs available for all fitness levels, including chair based exercises. You could invite a friend round to join in, this will help you to motivate each other and make it more fun. Call the Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland Advice Line nurses if you would like them to send you the FREE exercise



DVD 'Move on up'.

Even when it's a bit chilly, it is nice to get out for a bit of fresh air.

Here are a few tips that can help you to feel your best when you go out:

- Wrap up! Remember you will lose most heat from parts of your body that are not covered up so wear a hat, scarf and gloves.
- Doing a short warm up indoors, before you head out, can stop you from feeling cold. Try swinging your arms, marching on the spot or using the stairs. Anything that gets your pulse going will work well!
- When you go out, stick to well lit areas and wear bright clothing.

- Wear shoes that have good grip and use paths and pavements that have been gritted.
- If you know that the cold or wind makes you breathless or wheezy, use your inhaler before you go out.
- If the weather tends to affect your symptoms, and you use a mobile phone, contact the Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland Advice Line nurses and ask about signing up for the Air Quality & Weather Text Alert Service.

Remember, don't exercise if you 'feel rotten' or have a fever as this can make you more unwell.

'OH NO! IT ISN'T'...

The panto season is upon us, so here is a short quiz to remind you of some of the best known bits:

1. Who is Widow Twankey's son?
2. What did the Fairy Godmother need to make Cinderella's coach?
3. What did the giant at the top of the beanstalk say?
4. What did the clever cat wear?
5. Name the Seven Dwarves.....
6. What was the witch's house in Babes in the Wood made of?
7. What did Jack get in exchange for the cow?
8. What did the Evil Queen in Snow White ask her mirror?
9. How did Prince Charming find Cinderella again?
10. What warning of impending doom is always given in every pantomime?

For answers see page 4.

Extract from *The Activity Year Book: A Week by Week Guide for Use in Elderly Day and Residential Care* by Anni Bowden and Nancy Lewthwaite, published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers.



Vaccinations

Getting your vaccinations is a free and easy way to help keep yourself well, particularly over the winter months.

The vaccinations recommended for people with a chronic lung condition are the **Influenza vaccine (or flu jab)** and **Pneumococcal vaccine**. Having these vaccinations can reduce the number of flare-ups you have and reduce the chance that you will need to go to hospital. These vaccines are given as an injection (or jab) to your upper arm. They can be given at the same time.

- **Influenza (flu)** is a feverish illness that tends appear in the winter. Your GP surgery offers the flu jab from October to March and you should get it done once a year. Last year's vaccine might not work against this year's bug! You may not be able to get the flu jab while you are unwell so try to get it as early in the winter you can, before you pick up any coughs or colds. Some people worry that having the flu jab can end up giving them the flu. This is not true. The flu vaccine is called 'an inactivated injection', this means there is no live virus in the injection.

- **The pneumococcal infection** is found at the back of the nose and throat of healthy adults and children. It can be passed from person to person during close contact. Pneumococcal disease describes a range of illnesses such as pneumonia, septicaemia (blood poisoning) and meningitis (inflammation around the brain). People



with a chronic lung condition have a higher risk of becoming unwell with pneumonia but the pneumococcal vaccine can reduce this risk. Most people only need one pneumococcal vaccine in their lifetime. However if you have certain medical conditions (kidney disease and problems with your immune system) you may need a booster every 5 years.

Side effects are usually mild and only last a day or two. These include pain, swelling and redness where the jab was given. Occasionally people feel a slight fever, shivering, headache or aching muscles.

- If you have a sore or red area on your arm try applying a cold cloth.
- If you have a headache or slight fever drink plenty of fluids and take regular doses of paracetamol (but do not exceed the recommended dose).
- These symptoms usually disappear within one to two days without any treatment, however if you have increased breathlessness, swelling or a rash in the few days after vaccination contact your doctor or nurse.

CHEST-A-MINUTE

'I'm not looking forward to the winter, my breathing seems to get worse at this time of year'

'I was the same, but I've found there are a few things I can do to help.....'



- If it's cold or windy outside, I'll use my inhaler before I go out, this seems to ease my breathlessness and stop my chest from feeling tight.
- If it's windy, I'll wear a scarf loosely across my face, this seems to stop the wind from taking my breath away.
- I've also signed up for the CHSS Air Quality & Weather Text Alert, this sends me a text message to let me know if the weather is going to be bad enough that it might affect my breathing. I can plan my day a bit better, maybe leave the shopping until another day, or remember to take my scarf!

Do you find that adverse weather conditions or poor air quality affect your breathing? If you have a mobile phone you can sign up for a FREE text alert service? Call the Advice Line Nurses for more information.

Could a 'support group' have more to offer than you realised?

Do you feel like a 'grumpy gasper'? Or maybe you're still 'lung at heart'!? These are just two of our five support groups in Highland for people with chest conditions.

All are friendly and informal and are supported by Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland.

No two groups are the same and activities vary. These might include -

- regular outings and social events
- weekly chair exercises
- weekly light exercise sessions
- access to health information

However, all have two things in common -

- a chance to meet others with a similar health condition
- good humour

The 'Wick Wheezers' is for people living in the Wick and Thurso areas. Their weekly seated exercise sessions are peppered with good natured banter which continues over tea and coffee. The Group is a sociable one, and members look forward to regular outings.

Their most recent trip was the beautiful Dunrobin Castle in Golspie. They also managed a stop at Helmsdale for a meal on the way home. According to Maureen Williamson, the group's Secretary, they had "a really lovely day out".

The 'Cheerful Chesters' have around 60 members. Their Monday morning exercise session with Physiotherapist, Minty Duncan, is followed by tea/coffee and a blether.

Maureen Fraser is the group's Co-ordinator, "Each year we arrange outings to the theatre, bus trips and Seagull Trust Cruises. We also have Christmas Lunch in a local hotel. Our annual Coffee Morning at the end of May is a major fundraiser. Occasionally, if funds are low, we hold another at the end of September."

Barbara first heard about the Cheerful Chesters more than two years ago. She has COPD and was on an eight week rehab sessions at Raigmore Hospital's physiotherapy department. She says that joining the Group "... is the best thing I have done in a long time. Minty takes the class. She is so nice but she does not take any nonsense. I feel so much better and I can control my breathing without getting in a panic as I did before. I have



had two checks from the Nurse at the Health Centre for my peak flow, and it gets better each time.

If you'd like more information on our Highland groups contact the Advice Line Nurses or visit our website

www.chss.org.uk/groups



"I can control my breathing without getting in a panic as I did before..."

Answers to the quiz

ANSWERS TO QUIZ - 1. Madding, 2. A pumpkin and six white mice, 3. 'Fee, fi, fo, fum, I smell the blood of an Englishman. Be he alive or be he dead, I'll grind his bones to make my bread.', 4. Boots, 5. Sleepy, Dopey, Doc, Happy, Grumpy, Bashful, Sneezy, 6. Gingerbread, 7. Three magic beans, 8. 'Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's the fairest of them all?', 9. By trying her lost glass slipper on every girl in the kingdom, 10. It's BEHIND YOU!



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