Intermountain® Healthcare

Pulmonary Rehab

What is pulmonary rehab?

Pulmonary rehab (short for pulmonary rehabilitation) is a program for people with moderate or severe lung disease. It's run by a team of medical specialists working in different roles — doctors, nurses, respiratory therapists, exercise physiologists, and dietitians — and includes:

- Exercise training to strengthen your body and help you be more active with less fatigue
- Education on your lung condition and on what you can do to breathe better
- Support and counseling to help you build confidence and cope with the difficulties that often come with lung disease

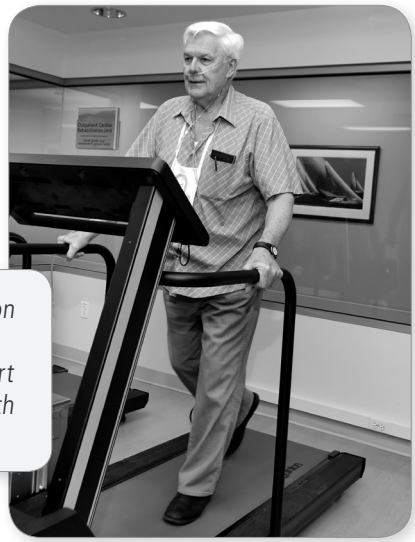
It's important to know that pulmonary rehab isn't "one size fits all." **The program is tailored to you.** Staff will work with you to create an individual plan that matches your condition, needs, and goals.

Why do I need it?

Studies have shown the pulmonary rehab programs make a big difference for people at all stages of lung disease. Specifically, the program can:

- Ease your shortness of breath
- Build your capacity for exercise and activity
- Reduce anxiety and depression
- Help you stay out of the hospital

Doctors often prescribe pulmonary rehab for people with **COPD** (chronic obstructive lung disease), **interstitial lung disease** (sarcoidosis or hypersensitivity pneumonitis, for example), **pulmonary hypertension**, **asthma**, and other chronic lung diseases.



Pulmonary rehabilitation can give you the skills, knowledge, and support to improve your life with lung disease.

How do I begin pulmonary rehab?

If you're hospitalized with a breathing problem, your first visit to pulmonary rehab may happen during your stay. This is **inpatient pulmonary rehab.** You may also choose to attend an **outpatient pulmonary rehab** program, either for a few weeks or on an ongoing basis. Your doctor can refer you to a program in your area. Intermountain programs are listed here:

in Logan, Utah: Pulmonary Rehabilitation at Logan Regional Hospital, 1400 No. 500 East, Logan UT
Phone: (435) 716 - 5323

in Ogden, Utah: Pulmonary Rehabilitation at McKay-Dee Hospital, 4401 Harrison Boulevard, Ogden UT,
Phone: (801) 387 - 3067

in Provo, Utah: Pulmonary Rehabilitiation at Utah Valley Regional Medical Center, 1034 N. 500 West, Provo UT
Phone: (801) 357 - 7162

in Salt Lake Valley: Pulmonary Rehabilitation at Intermountain Medical Center, 5121 S. Cottonwood Street, Murray UT
Phone: (801) 507 - 4688

Does my health insurance cover pulmonary rehab?

Health insurance companies differ in their coverage of pulmonary rehab. Here are some general guidelines:

- **Inpatient pulmonary rehab** before you leave the hospital is almost always covered.
- **Outpatient pulmonary rehab** is usually covered, based on your doctor's referral or prescription. You may be responsible for co-pays or co-insurance. The rehab staff can help you figure out your specific coverage.
- **Ongoing pulmonary rehab** is usually not covered. However, you can pay a monthly fee, similar to a gym membership, to participate. Many people decide to continue once they've seen how the program improves their lives.

How is the program structured?

Pulmonary rehab programs vary in structure. Yet they all share these basic elements:

- **Initial assessment.** Based on information from your doctor, the rehab staff will carefully evaluate your condition, needs, and lifestyle. They'll try to understand what limits you and what concerns you in your daily life. A test like the 6-minute walk test may be used to assess your capacity for physical activity.
- **Individualized planning.** You'll work with the rehab staff to design a plan that meets your needs. The plan may include how often to attend the rehab center and an easy-to-follow exercise plan to use at home. As you meet goals and discover what does (or doesn't) work well for you, staff can adjust your plan.
- **Ongoing communication with your doctor.** Rehab staff will share your plans and progress with the doctor who referred you to the program.
- **Classes and exercise sessions.** These give you the skills, knowledge, and opportunity to improve your health and well being. They also give you a chance to share with other people who have lung disease — and who are also striving to improve.

What's discussed in the classes?

Living better with lung disease requires specific knowledge and skills. Pulmonary rehab classes include topics such as:

- **Your lung disease.** Understanding your condition can help you see why treatment is important, how it affects your symptoms, and why you must actively follow your treatment plan.
- **Breathing techniques.** You'll learn and practice specific techniques to ease shortness of breath, help you relax, and clear your lungs.
- **Emotional impact of lung disease.** Your breathing is affected by your mood — and vice versa. You'll learn ways to reduce stress, seek support, and cope with the challenges of chronic lung disease.
- **Nutrition.** You'll get information on what and how to eat for better energy, stronger bones and muscles, and a healthier weight.
- **Tactics to make everyday activities easier.** You'll learn tips and tricks for conserving your energy throughout the day.
- **Exercising at home.** Most people with lung disease need regular exercise. Rehab classes can give you advice for following your exercise plan at home.

What happens in the exercise part?

In pulmonary rehab, your exercise program is uniquely designed for you. It lets you start at your own pace and helps you gradually increase activity as you're able.

As you exercise at pulmonary rehab, staff will monitor you for safety and keep track of your progress. They'll keep track of your blood pressure, blood oxygen, weight, and exercise ability. If you also have a heart problem, you may wear sticky patches (electrodes) on your chest that are connected to a monitor to check your heart rate and rhythm.

The exercise program has five basic elements:

- **Warming up.** Rehab staff will help you gradually warm up at the start of each session. This helps your body prepare for a workout and lessens the chance of problems during exercise.
- **Endurance activity.** Also called aerobic exercise, endurance activity includes walking and cycling — any activity that gets your heart pumping and your blood moving a little faster. Endurance activity helps your body use oxygen more efficiently. This makes everything else you do during the day — standing, showering, cooking, cleaning, laughing — easier and less tiring.
- **Strength training.** This isn't about body building or struggling with heavy barbells. Pulmonary rehab staff will guide you in strength exercises that use little (or no) special equipment. The goal is to build muscle strength and endurance. Rehab staff will pay special attention to strengthening your chest and arm muscles. When these muscles are strong, they can ease the strain on other muscles and help you breathe better.
- **Flexibility.** Gentle stretches can improve your balance and make it easier to move. Stretching can also reduce pain, stiffness, and stress. Pulmonary rehab staff can show you stretches to help open up your chest and lungs for easier breathing.
- **Cooling down.** Gradually slowing down can help keep your muscles from getting stiff after exercise.
- Of course, not all of your exercise needs to happen at the pulmonary rehab facility. Your exercise plan is portable! Pulmonary rehab staff will help you take what you've learned — personal goals and schedules, your favorite exercises — back to your own living room or den.

At first, I wasn't sure about pulmonary rehab. I thought, "why not just exercise at home?"

Now I'm glad my doctor encouraged me to go. I learned a lot that has helped me at home. And the therapists at my center are really helpful. They keep the exercise interesting.

— Walt B.

What other support can I expect from pulmonary rehab?

- Life with lung disease isn't always easy. For many people, pulmonary rehab is a place to connect with others who understand — and who can help make life easier and better. At pulmonary rehab, you can expect:
- **Support for vital lifestyle changes, such as quitting smoking.** Quitting may be one of the hardest things you'll ever do, but it's also one of the most important things you can do for your lung health. In pulmonary rehab, you'll learn strategies that can help you quit for good. Rehab therapists will also help you connect with support groups and classes so you aren't going it alone.

> *"I've been coming to pulmonary rehab for several years now. For me, it's better than a health club. It's seeing people I know. We encourage each other."*
>
> — Hal M.

- **Encouragement and motivation.** Pulmonary rehab is a safe, positive environment where everyone is working to improve their health and fitness. As you meet other people with lung disease, you can encourage each other. Pulmonary rehab has been shown to get people moving — from inactivity to activity, from depression to hope, and from isolation to engagement with life.

Is outpatient pulmonary rehab right for you?

Before starting outpatient pulmonary rehab, you'll talk with your doctor and/or rehab staff, and sign a form to show you're informed about the program. Make sure you ask any questions you have. Below is a table listing common benefits, risks, and alternatives for pulmonary rehab. Other benefits or risks might apply in your unique situation. The rest of this handout also gives more information about what happens in outpatient pulmonary rehab.

Potential benefits	Risks and potential complications	Alternatives
Pulmonary rehab can help you: • Ease shortness of breath • Improve your endurance and ability to exercise • Build or maintain your flexibility and strength • Lower your emotional stress • Ease anxiety and depression • Stay healthier and out of the hospital	Pulmonary rehab is designed to be safe, with therapists monitoring your comfort and symptoms. But as with any exercise, in rare cases pulmonary rehab can affect your health in unexpected ways. Pulmonary rehab brings a small risk of: • Abnormal heartbeat or blood pressure • Ineffective heart function • Chest pain • Heart attack or cardiac arrest **Promptly report any symptom to the rehab staff.** If you have a health emergency during a rehab session, healthcare providers will treat it.	Alternatives vary — talk to your doctor about resources for the education, support, and exercise you need.

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