

Lungs in Action

(Exercise Maintenance Post Rehabilitation)

Information for General Practitioners

Lungs in Action is an exercise maintenance program designed for people with stable chronic lung conditions and stable chronic heart failure **who have completed a pulmonary or heart failure rehabilitation program** within the last twelve months. If however, a hospitalization has occurred that is related to their respiratory condition or heart failure, an assessment for exercise capacity may be required by a rehabilitation clinician prior to referral into *Lungs in Action*. If the hospitalization was not related to their disease and would not have impacted upon their physical conditioning then a GP referral is possible. An example of a referral form is attached.

For patients with moderate to severe COPD, a weekly community-based exercise maintenance class, supervised by a trained fitness instructor or exercise physiologist, combined with a home exercise program is an effective intervention for maintaining improvements following pulmonary rehabilitation.^{1,2}

Lung Foundation Australia developed *Lungs in Action* in conjunction with experts in respiratory medicine, pulmonary rehabilitation physiotherapy, exercise physiology, nursing and the fitness industry and in consultation with patient advocates. At the end of 2011, *Lungs in Action* was extended to include graduates of heart failure rehabilitation (excluding NYHA Class IV) using a similar group skilled in heart failure management and rehabilitation.

Lungs in Action is a fitness program that assists people maintain the benefits achieved through pulmonary and heart failure rehabilitation. *Lungs in Action* is not a health program and instructors **are not trained to provide any medical advice** (although some physiotherapists and accredited exercise physiologists may have scope of practice to move beyond these parameters). However, the fitness professionals are trained to understand how to safely exercise clients with COPD or other chronic respiratory condition and heart failure. Blood pressure monitoring and measurement of oxygen saturation levels typically DO NOT occur in a *Lungs in Action* program.



Instead program guidelines, monitoring of perceived exertion and monitoring of symptoms combined with a tight referral process maintain the safety of the program.

People who complete pulmonary rehabilitation report significant physical and emotional gains and an improved quality of life, but find it difficult to comply with recommendations to continue with exercise without the ongoing support from a structured program or leader. *Lungs in Action* provides an essential structure that enables clients to maintain an exercise routine critical to keeping them well, socially connected and out of hospital.

Lungs in Action classes are flexible with an approved format (determined by credentialing criteria), held in facilities available to exercise professionals who are trained to work with people with respiratory disease and heart failure. The exercise classes could have a number of formats but must include walking, upper and lower body strength exercises, balance and stretching as this style of program has the highest evidence base. Recent evidence also allows for Tai Chi programs.

Lungs in Action instructors are physiotherapists, accredited exercise physiologists or qualified personal trainers, having Certificate III and Certificate IV in Fitness with a minimum of two years experience in the older adults specialty. Each instructor has been mentored by a rehabilitation physiotherapist or exercise physiologist to deliver their program. This involved attendance at a number of rehabilitation sessions, completion of core competency checklists and written assignments and practical assessment. Each instructor has Senior Level First Aid.

For more information please don't hesitate to contact Lung Foundation Australia on 1800 654 301, visit the Lungs in Action Website at www.lungsinaction.com.au or email lungsinaction@lungfoundation.com.au.

As a general practitioner it is encouraged that you review the current eligibility criteria and the specific GP referral form for the Lungs in Action program. These are available via the website or by emailing the above address.

References:

1. Ries AL, Bauldoff GS, Carlin BW, Casaburi R, Emery CF, Mahler DA, et al. Pulmonary Rehabilitation: Joint ACCP/AACVPR Evidence-Based Clinical Practice Guidelines. *Chest*. 2007 May; 131(5 Suppl): 4S-42S.
2. Spencer, L., Alison, J., & McKeough, Z. (2010). Maintaining benefits following pulmonary rehabilitation: a randomised controlled trial. *European Respiratory Journal*, 35 (3), 571-577.

This brochure is one in a series produced by Lung Foundation Australia to provide information on lung disease, its treatment and related issues. The information published by Lung Foundation Australia is designed to be used as a guide only, is not intended or implied to be a substitute for professional medical treatment and is presented for the sole purpose of disseminating information to reduce lung disease.

Any information relating to medication brand names is correct at the time of printing. Lung Foundation Australia has no control or responsibility for the availability of medications, which may occasionally be discontinued or withdrawn.

Please consult your family doctor or specialist respiratory physician if you have further questions relating to the information contained in this leaflet. For details of patient support groups in Australia please call 1800 654 301.