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Media Release – Breathe Easy – Exercise Can Help You!

From: NZ Register of Exercise Professionals



Breathe Easy – Exercise Can Help You!

When it comes to those with respiratory conditions, such as asthma or COPD, exercise is an important part of the management of symptoms and overall health.

Affecting 1 in 6 New Zealanders, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) is the term used to cover a range of respiratory conditions including emphysema, chronic bronchitis and chronic asthma. Those with these conditions tend to have symptoms that are on the more serious end, impacting on their daily life.

Asthma is the most common respiratory condition and it affects both children (1 in 7 children) and adults. It's caused by sensitive airways which cause tightening and swelling, making it difficult to breathe. The symptoms of the average asthmatic vary greatly. Some have mild symptoms which can be managed easily, and many experience severe effects that can require hospitalisation and daily management. Symptoms can be aggravated by colds, dust mites and weather conditions.

While for some asthma can be aggravated by exercise, it is also a tool for managing symptoms and generally improving wellbeing. Exercise strengthens your respiratory system and makes it easier for you to breathe so generally speaking there is no reason to stop, or slow down. When you are physically active and maintaining a level of fitness, you are able to process oxygen more efficiently, and your muscles are able to do more work with decreased oxygen. What you can give up however is a damp living environment, smoking, and an unhealthy lifestyle as these things can make your asthma worse.

Up to 15% of adults aged over 45 years suffer from COPD such as emphysema. COPD in this age group is most often caused by smoking.

While there is no cure for COPD, there are plenty of ways to manage symptoms and improve quality of life. Even in this type of condition part of the treatment is exercise, although often at a much lower level than an asthmatic. Exercise has the same strengthening impact on respiratory and muscular structures.

If you have asthma or another form of COPD, exercise should form part of your treatment and part of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. We recommend checking in with your doctor prior to starting an exercise programme. Working with a registered exercise professional who has the knowledge and skill to help support you is very important.

We also recommend:

- Making sure you carry your asthma medication with you during a workout (if you are working with a trainer they will be happy to carry this in their kit, especially for outdoor sessions)
- Take time to warm your body up with gentle heart rate raising activities before engaging in more strenuous exercise.
- If your asthma is triggered by cold weather conditions, during the winter take your exercise activity indoors.
- Keeping your registered exercise professional up to date with your symptoms so they can modify your exercise programme to suit.

Contact details for further information about the exercise industry:

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NZ Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs) - Independent not for profit quality mark of exercise professionals and facilities. Using REPs Registered Exercise Professionals is the “warrant of fitness check” that exercise professionals and facilities meet New Zealand and internationally benchmarked standards to deliver safe exercise advice and instruction. REPs is affiliated globally to other national exercise professional registers representing over 210,000 exercise professionals through the International Confederation of Registers for Exercise Professionals (ICREPs) - www.icreps.org

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Exercise Association of New Zealand - Not for profit exercise industry representative organisation. Its mission is to proactively support a sustainable exercise and fitness industry in New Zealand by growing participation in structured exercise through advocacy, information and industry standards.

