

Bronchiectasis self-management plan

Information for patients



This booklet contains advice on how to self-manage the symptoms and effects of bronchiectasis.

Keep this booklet up to date with your personal information and details of your condition and symptoms. Bring it to your hospital appointments, and keep it in a safe place so that you can refer to it should you need to.

If you have any questions or concerns about anything covered in this booklet, speak to your bronchiectasis clinical nurse specialist or bronchiectasis respiratory physiotherapist.

What is bronchiectasis?

Bronchiectasis is a long-term condition where the airways of the lungs become widened, leading to a build-up of excess mucus that can make the lungs more vulnerable to infection.

What is a self-management plan?

A self-management plan is a plan to help you:

- keep yourself well
- monitor your symptoms
- know how to manage a flare-up (exacerbation) of your condition

What are the benefits of a self-management plan?

A self-management plan will:

- help you to stay as healthy as you can with the best quality of life possible
- help reduce the frequency of flare-ups and hospital appointments
- give you information so you know what to do and who to contact when you have a flare-up
- help to slow down the rate at which your lung condition progresses

My bronchiectasis self-management plan

Name	
Signature	
Date of birth	
NHS/hospital number	
Date plan discussed	
Healthcare professional	
Signature	
Date plan updated	

My bronchiectasis medication

Type of medication	Prescribed dose (dose and how many times taken a day)	Delivery device (for example, a spacer or a metered dose inhaler (MDI))
Inhaled medication		
Rescue pack medication		
Other respiratory medication		

My usual day-to-day symptoms (not during a chest infection)

Please tick the most relevant answer to each of the statements below:

Cough

I usually cough:

- most days of the week
- one or two days of the week
- a few days per month
- only when I have a chest infection

The sputum I cough up is:

- watery
- sticky
- thick
- loose

Sputum (phlegm)

I usually cough up sputum:

- most days of the week
- one or two days of the week
- a few days per month
- only when I have a chest infection

I usually cough up:

- one teaspoon of sputum a day
- one tablespoon of sputum a day
- half a sputum pot of sputum a day
- one sputum pot of sputum a day

Shortness of breath

I usually get breathless:

- walking around my home
- walking outside on flat ground
- walking up a flight of stairs
- playing sports
- only when I have a chest infection
- I never get breathless

The sputum I cough up is:

- clear
- white
- light yellow or green
- dark yellow or green

Other symptoms

Please list any other symptoms you experience daily below.

For example, wheezing, tiredness and fatigue (extreme tiredness).

.....

.....

Action plan when you are well and stable

When you are well and stable, the following actions will help you to stay healthy and reduce your risk of developing a flare-up:

- clear your chest as advised by your physiotherapist
- take your medicines and inhalers as prescribed
- never allow your medicines to run out
- keep a rescue antibiotic course at home (if needed)
- drink plenty of fluids, eat a healthy diet and exercise regularly
- stop smoking (ask for help from your practice nurse if needed)
- get your annual flu vaccination
- avoid visiting anyone who is unwell with a cold, flu or a chest infection
- keep a supply of sputum pots at home
- record how much sputum you usually cough up and its colour

Daily chest clearance exercises

Clearing your chest of sputum every day is very important, as it will:

- reduce your likelihood of having frequent chest infections
- reduce how much you cough
- improve your breathing
- ensure you have a better night's sleep

You were shown how to perform chest clearance exercises by a physiotherapist on

Please contact us if you feel the exercises are not working anymore or if you would like a reminder of how to do them.

Recommended day-to-day chest treatment

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Action plan when you have a chest infection

If you have a chest infection you may:

- feel generally unwell
- cough up more sputum than usual or your sputum may be stickier than usual
- notice the colour of your sputum gets darker (for example, it may change from being clear to light or dark yellow or green, or from light yellow or green to dark yellow or green)
- feel shorter of breath

When you are unwell with a chest infection, the following actions may help you to recover quicker:

- clear your chest more often (at least twice a day)
- take your medicines and inhalers as prescribed
- drink plenty of fluids
- collect a sputum sample in a sputum pot and take this to your GP surgery as soon as possible (if you are unable to get to your GP surgery the same day, keep your sample in the fridge overnight)
- start your rescue pack of antibiotics

Please note that some colds get better without antibiotics. If there is no change in the amount or colour of your sputum, **do not** start taking any antibiotics.

Recommended treatment for chest infections

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Diary of flare-ups (exacerbations)

If you have a flare-up, please use the table below to record any symptom changes, whether you were prescribed antibiotics, and if so, which antibiotics and for how long.

Date of flare-up	Symptom changes (for example, change in sputum colour or consistency)	Were you prescribed antibiotics? (Yes or no)	Length of antibiotic course (if given)	Did you provide a sputum sample? (Yes or no)

When to seek medical attention

Routine GP appointment	<p>When Make an appointment to see your GP if you feel your bronchiectasis is worse (but there is no change to the amount, consistency or colour of the sputum you are coughing up) and doesn't improve within 48 hours.</p> <p>Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect a sputum sample and take it with you to your GP appointment. • Start taking antibiotics after receiving your sputum test result (if needed).
Urgent GP appointment	<p>When Call your GP for an urgent appointment if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you have a chest infection where you feel unwell • the amount, consistency or colour of the sputum you are coughing up changes • you feel more breathless than usual • you are coughing up blood • you experience chest pain when breathing in <p>Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect a sputum sample and take it with you to your GP appointment. • Start taking the recommended antibiotics immediately without waiting for your sputum test result.
Emergency GP appointment or call 999 for an ambulance	<p>When Call your GP for an emergency appointment (or call 999 for an ambulance if out of hours or you are extremely unwell) if you are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • confused or drowsy • coughing up large amounts of blood • severely breathless, or you feel breathless while talking <p>Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect a sputum sample (if possible) to take with you to your GP appointment or to hospital. • Start taking the recommended antibiotics immediately without waiting for your sputum test result.

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For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport**

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