1. Stay active

Exercise as much as possible, and try to commit to a daily activity. This will help to maintain your endurance and muscular strength. A pulmonary rehabilitation program is a great way to improve and maintain your quality of life. Breathing techniques can be learned that may help with shortness of breath.

2. Stop smoking

Avoid exposure to second-hand smoke. Smoking cigarettes can speed up lung function decline, and it can increase your risk for getting lung cancer. Exposure to smoke can make symptoms worse and may lead to hospitalizations.

3. If supplemental oxygen is prescribed, wear it as directed

When blood oxygen levels drop, pressure in the blood vessels of the lungs increases. This can affect the heart’s ability to pump blood through your lungs. Over time, increased pressure on the heart can lead to heart failure. You may need to increase the amount of oxygen used during exertion.

Different devices can deliver oxygen. These include small and large tanks and concentrators. You may need to track how much oxygen you use. If you plan to fly, you will need to coordinate your oxygen needs with your physician and the airline.
4. Follow up regularly with your lung doctor (pulmonologist).

The frequency of visits will be based on your symptoms and medication needs. Breathing, oxygen level, and walking tests are usually done at each visit. Questions about your current symptoms and side effects from medications are usually discussed.

5. If you have other medical problems, such as heart failure or sleep apnea, make sure your lung doctor knows about them and ensure they are well managed.

For example, if you have sleep apnea, use your CPAP machine whenever you sleep. If you have heart failure, monitor your weight and diet closely. This will help avoid buildup of extra fluid in your body, which may worsen your breathing symptoms.

6. Make sure you’re up to date with pneumonia vaccines.

Get an influenza (flu) shot every year when it becomes available in the fall.

7. Talk with your lung doctor

About whether antifibrotic medications, pirfenidone (Esbriet®) or nintedanib (Ofev®), would be beneficial. These have been shown to reduce disease progression in patients with IPF.

To learn more about pulmonary fibrosis and idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, go to chestfoundation.org/pf