

Introduction

- Good breathing is essential to being able to live a fulfilled life – but lung health is a major issue for homeless people. **This Action Guide can help you improve your health!**
- It offers steps you can take to improve your breathing.
- Suggests what to do if worried about your breathing.
- The fill-in sections help you record relevant details for when you see a doctor or nurse - **Fill in your answers and take it with you!**
- If you have breathing issues – don't ignore them! It might be helpful to ask yourself the following questions.

Room to Breathe Action Guide



1 Do you have any of the following?

- Regularly feeling breathless or easily out of puff
- Coughing
- Coloured phlegm
- 'Rattley' chest
- Wheezing
- Pain when you breathe

2 How long have you had these issues?

If you have any of the above issues – or are worried about any other health issue then get to the doctors or see a nurse at a homeless service.

When you see a medical professional you often only have a short time with them. Don't worry about it – it's the same for everyone! Make the most of their time and go armed with the following information:



Room to Breathe Action Guide

This is a Groundswell Action Guide – use it to improve your health! We spoke to 330 people experiencing homelessness in London. We found that problems with the respiratory system were a serious health issue for many.

This Action Guide includes our findings and gives practical steps you can take to improve your health.

Groundswell

Groundswell is a charity that involve homeless people in creating solutions to homelessness. Our Peer Advocates support homeless people to get to health appointments and address health issues – Peer Advocates have all been homeless themselves.

030 0003 9600
www.groundswell.org.uk
 @ItsGroundswell

3 How many health issues am I aware I have?

4 What medication am I on?

5 What impairments/disabilities affect me?

6 Do I have any pain anywhere?

6 What's my current housing situation?

7 Do I smoke tobacco? How much per day?

8 Do I want support with my mental health?

9 Do I use drugs? Which ones?

REMEMBER that Doctors and Nurses are there to help. Make the most of them and get your health checked out.

Let them know when you see them.

It's a private question – but it's useful for a health professional if you are willing to share this info.

Existing conditions

If you have an existing issue with your breathing there are steps you can take to manage it:

- Cutting down or stopping smoking
- Getting regular exercise
- Drink and eat healthily
- Get treatment for stress and anxiety
- Wash bedding and sleeping bags regularly
- Learning some breathing techniques

If you have a lung condition like Asthma or COPD ask a Doctor whether any of the following would be of benefit to you:

- Can we write down what I need to do and when I need to do it to keep me well?
- Is my inhaler technique correct?
- Do I need a 'Rescue Pack'? (Medication to help if you have a flare-up)
- Can you refer me to Pulmonary Rehab? (A six week course that includes strength training, cardiovascular exercise and education individualised for you by a physiotherapist)

“A lot of people like us don't like going to doctors. I am one of the worst in the world keeping appointments! It's too much of an effort to go and get the help that you need, than it is to just snuggle down and think fuck it, it will go away on its own. But it probably won't and I'd rather know.”

Find more info and advice at:

The British Lung Foundation:
www.blf.org.uk | 030 0003 0555

NHS Smoke Free:
www.nhs.uk/smokefree

Room to Breathe

Groundswell spoke to 330 people experiencing homelessness about their health. We found:

8% had bronchitis

2 1/2 times more likely to suffer from COPD

Twice as likely to have Asthma

Three times more likely to use an inhaler

35% have smoked crack cocaine regularly

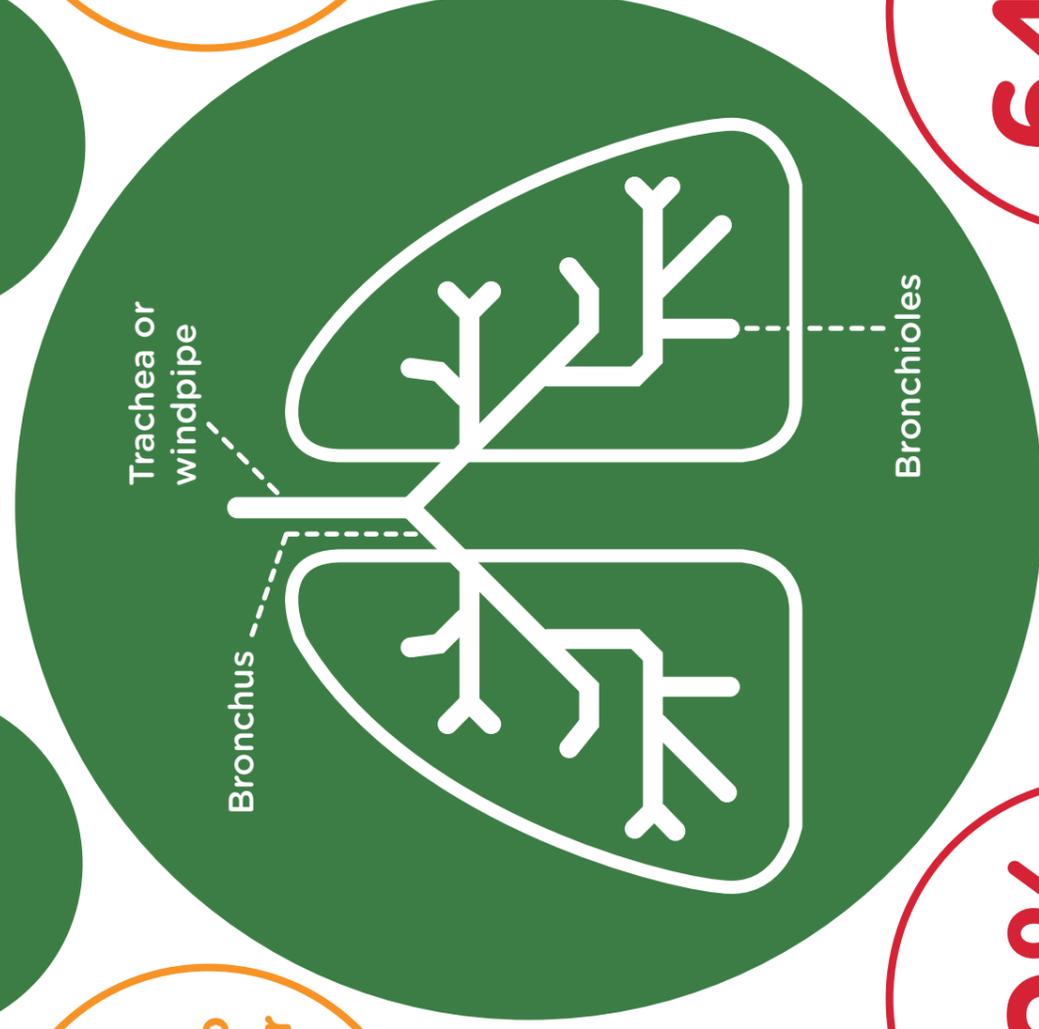
46% smoked 'dog ends' regularly

69% had difficulty breathing due to traffic fumes

69% 'expect to have a cough' when rough sleeping

64% of rough sleepers had chest infections

85% smoke tobacco. Half want to quit



There are steps you can take to look after your breathing

- **Get vaccinated**

Ask a health professional for your flu jab (every autumn) & pneumonia jab (just once).

- **Watch where you sleep**

If you're sleeping out avoid pigeon droppings and mould if you can.

- **Avoid fumes if possible**

Sleeping and sitting out on busy roads can make it difficult to breathe.

If you're a smoker the best way you can improve your breathing is to quit full stop!

If you are thinking about quitting try and speak to a doctor, nurse or support worker who can then get a stop smoking specialist to see you:

- Make clear you want to stop smoking.
- Ask which medication is available to help.
- Ask what other support is available.
- Set a date for trying to quit by.