

What about confidentiality?

Everything you say to us is confidential and we will normally only disclose information to professionals involved in your care with your consent. Summary information is stored on an electronic system which can be accessed by other professionals involved in your care. You will always see any written correspondence between professionals within our team.

The only time we may have to break your confidentiality is if you tell us something that makes us concerned about your safety or the safety of someone else. In this case we would always discuss this with you first if possible.

What next?

If you are interested in meeting with us and have not yet been referred, please talk to your respiratory doctor or nurse or member of the CRS team and they can refer you.

Your medical care will not be affected in any way if you decide that you do not want to pursue this sort of help.

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or whh-tr.whitthealthPALS@nhs.net

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet please contact us on 020 7288 3182. We will try our best to meet your needs.

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Breathlessness Support Service

A patient's guide

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What is the Breathlessness Support Service?

You may have a respiratory health condition and be wondering how we could help. As part of the Whittington Hospital Respiratory Medicine team, we work with people who are feeling under stress due to the impact of their physical health condition.

Many people who live with respiratory conditions, such as complex asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), find their lives are affected in a whole range of different ways. Your health condition might affect you in one or some of these ways:

- feeling worried or frightened about being breathless (and getting more breathless when you feel worried)
- feeling distressed, as if you can't cope with it all
- giving up things you enjoy
- feeling unhappy or angry about how your health condition has affected your life
- interference with relationships with partners, family and friends
- having concerns about work or studies
- worrying or feeling hopeless about the future

- losing your self-confidence
- difficulties with managing your condition or the treatment
- finding it hard to make changes your doctor or other member of the Respiratory team have recommended e.g. giving up smoking.

How can I benefit from meeting with a psychologist?

We can talk with you about your own experience. We can explore how your physical health impacts upon your life and then look at how you would like your life to improve alongside your respiratory condition. We can help you identify what changes are achievable and meaningful to you. We may then help you to develop new skills and/or expand your existing skills to help you work towards your desired changes.

Does this mean my doctor thinks my problems are 'all in my mind'?

No - certainly not! Seeing a psychologist does not mean your Respiratory team or we think your problems are in your mind. You are simply taking a very positive step in trying to reduce the impact of your physical health condition on your life.

What will happen when I see a psychologist?

You may wish to come to the first meeting on your own, or you are welcome to bring friends or relatives with you. We will then discuss whether this service or another service may be helpful to you and you can think about whether you would like to give this a go. Some people benefit from just one or a few sessions; others may prefer a longer period of working together. Interpreters can be arranged if you need.