

Respiratory psychology service

Information for patients

The respiratory psychology service is available to some patients with severe breathlessness, asthma or complex respiratory problems and who are under the care of a respiratory consultant at the Royal Free Hospital.

How can the psychology service help me?

When you have a respiratory problem and/or experience breathlessness it may affect you emotionally. Respiratory conditions and symptoms such as breathlessness can be distressing, leading to low mood and feelings of anxiety. When we feel anxious or have a low mood, this may make respiratory symptoms worse. Some people also report feelings such as:

- panic attacks
- concern about treatment, medication, procedures or operations
- worry about the future, fear about ill health and dying
- anger
- concern about personal relationships and/or worry about sexuality

For some people, health problems can bring up difficult memories from a long time ago or other problems in their life can make it more difficult to manage their health or make lifestyle changes. The list is not exhaustive and these common feelings often pass with time; however for some they can persist and make managing their condition difficult.

The respiratory psychology service may be able to help you make sense of your experience, provide a space to discuss your concerns and direct you to services that may help reduce the impact on your life.

In addition, before being prescribed some specialist medications, a psychological assessment is required as part of the preparation process.

How can I arrange a respiratory psychology referral?

Referrals are made via a member of the specialist respiratory team. Your specialist nurse, physiotherapist or respiratory doctor will be able to advise if you are eligible. The respiratory psychology clinic currently runs on Thursday afternoons.

What happens once I am referred to the respiratory psychologist?

Following your referral we will arrange an initial 50 minute assessment appointment where you will have the opportunity to confidentially discuss the issues that are concerning you. You can attend this appointment alone or with your partner, family members or carer. You and the psychologist will then decide together on the best course of action and which services are best placed to meet your needs. Occasionally, it might be that you arrange to

meet the psychologist for a couple of further short sessions to work towards goals that are specifically tailored to your needs.

Useful contacts

If you would like to discuss anything contained in this information leaflet or would like to know more about how the psychology service works, please call 020 7794 0500 extension 23331 and speak to a member of the team. The psychologist will contact you as soon as possible if appropriate.

We welcome feedback about our service and we support the patient advice and liaison service (PALS). PALS can be contacted if you have a problem with any of our services, need advice or information about local services or suggestions for improvements. You can call PALS on: 020 7472 6447 or contact them via their online form: www.royalfree.nhs.uk/contact-us.

For more information about talking therapies available in your area, visit the NHS Choices website for contact details of your nearest IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) service or speak to your GP.

If you are feeling distressed and need to speak to someone out of hours, please contact Samaritans free of charge on 116 123 or call NHS 111 for advice.

For more information about living with a respiratory condition visit the British Lung Foundation website: www.blf.org.uk or Asthma UK: www.asthma.org.uk.

More information

For more information about the psychology and respiratory services at the Royal Free London visit our website:

- www.royalfree.nhs.uk/services/services-a-z/psychology
- www.royalfree.nhs.uk/services/services-a-z/respiratory-medicine

Your feedback

If you have any feedback on this leaflet or for a list of references for it, please email: rf.communications@nhs.net.

Alternative formats

This leaflet is also available in large print. If you need this leaflet in another format – for example Braille, a language other than English or audio – please speak to a member of staff.

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