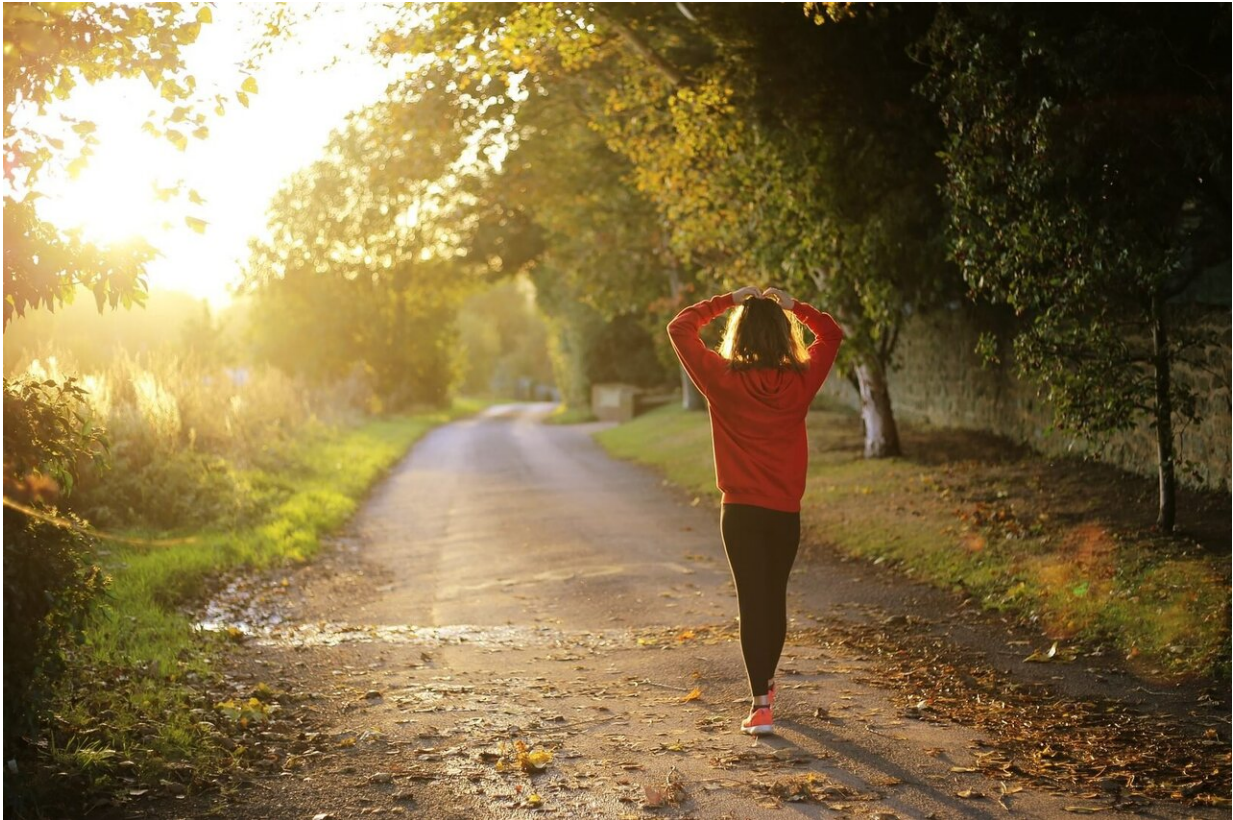


Exercising with asthma during COVID-19

March 19 2020, by Olivia Miller



Credit: Pixabay

People with asthma have been advised by the World Health Organization (WHO) and other health organizations that they are a group at risk to the COVID-19 virus.

Dr. John Dickinson, an expert in respiratory problems in athletes and

[exercise](#)-induced [asthma](#) at Kent, has provided advice for those with asthma on keeping active whilst not increasing risk to health in these uncertain times. He said:

"It is difficult to know precisely who is most at risk to COVID-19, partly because everyone's response to the virus will vary and because asthma itself can vary in severity from mild to severe. Obviously those who fall into the severe category are at a higher risk than those with mild asthma. First and foremost, people with asthma should take the guidance available to them on reducing risk infection seriously and also make sure those around them take it seriously too. In addition people with asthma should ensure they are well controlled, this means regularly (on a daily basis) using their prevention inhaler, which is usually a brown or purple colored inhaler. It's not all about relying on the blue inhaler to get through the moments when symptoms present.

"For people with asthma, exercise is a vital part of disease management, but people with asthma may be worried about if they should discontinue their current exercise regime."

What are the key things I need to do to reduce risk to my health?

"If you have asthma and want to engage in exercise this is great. However, this isn't the time to enter a phase of heavy training. Engaging in heavy training can acutely reduce immune function and opens the window for short term increase to infection. To reduce this chance when training don't choose to push yourself too hard, maintain hydration and eat a balanced diet (including fruit and vegetables). This also isn't the time to embark on an aggressive, rapid weight loss plan. Take care with calorie restriction at this time. If you feel symptomatic don't train."

How can I exercise regularly, if I have asthma and I am being told to be socially distant?

"For those asthmatics who enjoy activities such as cycling, running or walking you should keep up with this. Unfortunately it will mean not joining large groups to enjoy the activity together but at least you can still get out. Going out with a partner will be less risky than exercising with a big group but remember to keep up good hygiene practices, keep a distance from each other, avoid a welcoming hand shake/hug and don't share water bottles."

How hard should I exercise?

"This isn't the time to push yourself for a personal best in the next month or so. Use this time to conduct maintenance training. Regularly exercising is great to maintain your current health status, just make sure you do it keeping in mind social distancing, good hygiene and a [balanced diet](#) with a good hydration strategy. Avoid doing back to back hard training sessions. As mentioned above this could lead to acute fall in immune function and open the door to picking up an infection."

Top 5 tips for exercising with asthma during COVID-19 uncertainty

1. Ensure asthma is well controlled and you are using your prevention inhalers regularly as prescribed
2. Maintain good hygiene, including regularly washing hands and reducing face touching
3. Be mindful of [social distancing](#) when exercising, avoid exercising with large groups
4. Be sensible with [exercise intensity](#), this is not the time to achieve a personal best in the next 6 weeks.

5. Ensure your diet is well balanced and avoid significant calorie reduction.

Dr. John Dickinson is a Reader within the School of Sport and Exercise Science and Head of the Exercise Respiratory Clinic. His main area of research focuses on [respiratory problems](#) in athletes. He has over 17 years' experience of investigating issues such as asthma and dysfunctional breathing in athletes. The population groups he has investigated include GB Swimmers, England Football Team and many other elite athletes preparing for major competitions such as the Olympic Games.

Provided by University of Kent

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