

Top tips: Other ways to manage the pulmonary fibrosis cough

There are also lifestyle changes and non-drug treatments ways to help manage your cough. Speak to your doctor or specialist healthcare team about other possible drivers which may be contributing to your cough e.g. acid reflux, postnasal drip (sinus problems), side effects of certain medications, infections, inflammation, other chest conditions. These will need to be treated/managed effectively to minimize their impact.

You may also find some of the following tips helpful to try:

- 1) Sip water at regular intervals throughout the day as this will keep your throat moist reducing dryness and irritation.
- 2) Keep well hydrated and aim to drink approximately 1.5 to 2 litres of water daily (*NB: unless you are on a fluid restriction regime recommended by your medical team*). Avoid caffeine and alcohol which can increase throat dryness.
- 3) Practice breathing in gently through your nose – this reduces the irritating effect of cold air on the throat and helps to warm, filter and moisten the air you breathe in.
- 4) Try breathing out through pursed lips – this helps channel the air and cushion the vocal cords to reduce further irritation.
- 5) Be aware of your posture and try to relax any areas of tension that you notice. [Explore different relaxation, mindfulness and distraction techniques](#) to find out which are most helpful for you.



Action for Pulmonary Fibrosis

- 6) [Learn how to breathe gently and rhythmically](#) using your diaphragm
- 7) If going out in cold or windy conditions, try loosely wrapping a light scarf around your mouth and try to breathe in through your nose if you can.
- 8) Try swallowing to ease and reduce tickling and irritation in the throat.
- 9) Try sucking boiled sweets or chewing gum – be aware that medicated lozenges can cause more dryness of the throat. Try non-medicated lozenges such as honey based or menthol free which have a soothing effect.
- 10) Try steam inhalation using a facial steamer or a bowl of water. Always take care when using hot water and gradually build up your tolerance levels if you find it of benefit. Be aware that adding essential oils to the water may be helpful for some but cause more dryness / irritation for others.
- 11) You may find using an air humidifier or purifier helpful.
- 12) Keep a record of your cough triggers and try to avoid/minimise contact with any known triggers such as smoky, dusty, or polluted atmospheres, animal fur, pollen, sprays, cleaning products.
- 13) If you smoke – consult your doctor or NHS website for advice on stopping and the contact details of your [local smoking cessation service](#).
- 14) If activity and exercise trigger your cough, pace yourself more and practice breathing through your nose as able. Build up your [exercise](#) tolerance gradually.



- 15) Try to keep your home at a comfortable and constant temperature which suits you.
- 16) If your cough is dry, unproductive and persistent a respiratory physiotherapist /speech and language therapist will be able to advise on additional cough suppression techniques which may be helpful in controlling it. Ask for a referral to a cough clinic for this support.
- 17) If your cough produces regular mucus/phlegm which is difficult to manage, it would be helpful for you to learn how to clear this effectively and in a controlled manner. Techniques such as [Active Cycle of Breathing](#) can be helpful in achieving this. Ask for referral on to a respiratory physiotherapist who can assess your individual needs and recommend an appropriate self-management plan for airway clearance.