

Peaceful Protests, Lung Disease, and COVID-19

Respiratory Health Association supports protesters and those who are speaking out for racial justice. At the same time, we recognize that standing in a large crowd for long periods of time raises the risk of increased transmission of COVID-19. To ensure your health and safety during the global COVID-19 pandemic, individuals who engage in protests should take extra precautions to protect their lung health. This is especially important for those who have lung disease or other lung health conditions. Should you choose to protest, RHA recommends you take the following steps to ensure you are prepared.

During recent protests in several communities, police officers have used tear gas to control crowds. The American Thoracic Society has called for a moratorium on the use of tear gas as it causes short- and long-term respiratory injury. People with asthma may experience severe bronchospasm, making it difficult to breathe. Tear gas may also trigger an asthma attack and lead to respiratory failure and death.

Things to Consider:



Follow the CDC's recommended social distancing guidelines of 6' whenever possible. In some cases, social distancing may be difficult. Should there be corralling of large groups, consider making an exit.



Exposure to tear gas, pepper spray or other irritants may increase risk of spreading or contracting coronavirus because they increase coughing.



Protest with those with whom you already spend time, such as family members or roommates, to reduce the risk of contracting coronavirus.



Do not attend a protest if you are sick.

Emergency Plan:

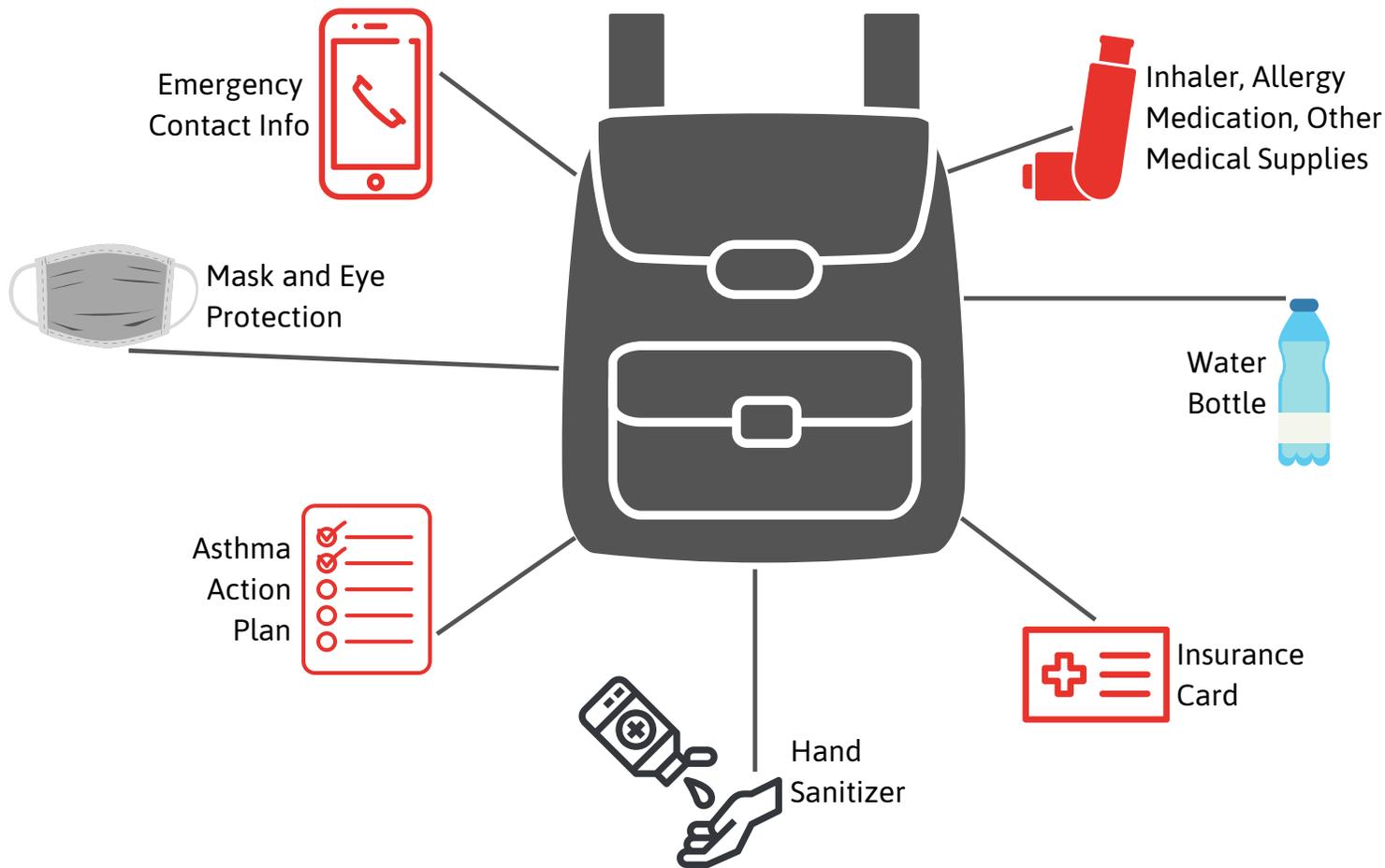
Should you find yourself in a potentially dangerous position, be sure you are prepared for next steps.

- Always travel with a family member or friend.
- Have a reliable emergency phone number on hand.
- Develop an exit plan before you begin, and share that plan with others who are protesting with you.
- Bring any necessary medical supplies or other essential items.

Peaceful Protests, Lung Disease, and COVID-19

What to Bring:

It may be a good idea to bring a backpack with you to carry some essential items, such as:



After You Protest:

Monitor yourself for symptoms, as they can take up to 14 days to appear. If you develop a fever, sore throat, or cough, contact your doctor. The CDC recommends that all protesters get tested for COVID-19. To ensure the accuracy of test results, protesters should wait five days before getting tested. Illinois residents can get tested for free at one of the 11 state-run testing sites regardless of symptoms. Find the site closest to you here: <http://www.dph.illinois.gov/testing>.

Protesting is not an option for everyone, especially those with severe lung disease, including uncontrolled asthma, or individuals with family members who have lung diseases. If you would like to participate but are unable to protest, consider other ways to contribute:



Participate in a justice caravan



Donate to social justice organizations



Sign petitions



Engage in meaningful conversations