

Recovering from Breathlessness

If you are very breathless and feel panic this method will help you calm your breathing until you can breathe quietly from your tummy again. It will allow time for the air to leave your lungs as you breathe out and makes room for the next breath in.

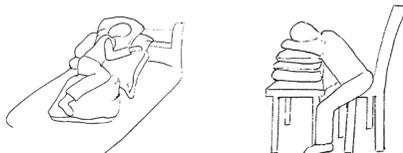
- Get into a forward lean position
- Use a hand held fan (see leaflet)
- Blow out onto the fan – don't worry about the in breath, this will happen automatically
- Purse your lips as you breathe out if it helps
- When you feel ready, increase the time you blow out for.
- Once your breathing eases, sit up straight
- Relax shoulders and upper chest and start to breathe at your tummy
- Stay sitting still until you have regained your breath fully.

General Advice

- Avoid holding your breath when doing activities i.e climbing stairs or bending.
- Blow out when bending, reaching, standing up etc. This is called 'Blow as you go'
- Do not rush. You will be less breathless if you take your time.
- Use 'paced breathing'
 - take a breath in and out on each step if you are climbing stairs.
 - count in time with walking steps.
- Your physiotherapist will help you with this.

Resting Positions

These are helpful if you are breathless at rest or very tired. The pillows give extra support



Your physiotherapist will offer you help and advice to help you to use this information effectively.

With acknowledgement BIS, Cambridge



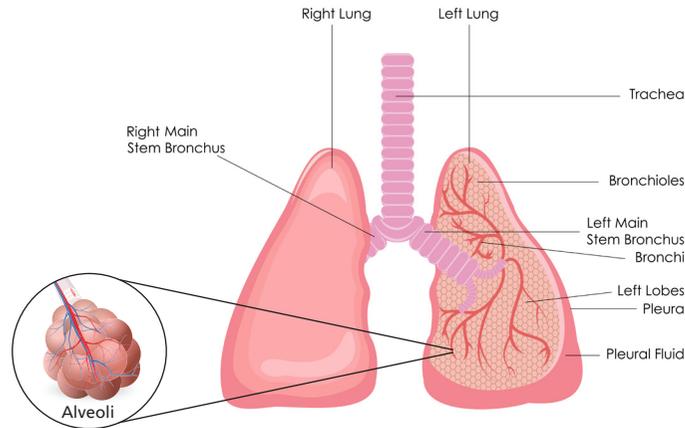
Managing your breathlessness

Information for patients

This information is to help you to learn how to manage your breathlessness. If you feel that your usual level of breathlessness has changed in any way, or has suddenly got worse please seek advice from your GP.

Normal Breathing

You have two lungs situated in your chest, one on each side. They are responsible for bringing oxygen into your body to ensure that your body can function.



Lungs

When you breathe in the air flows through a series of tubes as far as the sac like structure where oxygen is released into the blood and taken to all parts of your body.

Breathing is also helped by muscles. The main muscle is a large flat sheet that covers the base of your ribcage. This is called the diaphragm. As you breathe in it moves down and draws the air into your lungs. Your tummy will push forward as it moves. Your diaphragm relaxes when you breathe out and your tummy will rest back in. This is a very strong muscle and does not tire while it is working.

Another set of muscles is the breathing accessory muscles. Generally they are used for moving your head, neck and arms. However, you may have noticed these muscles pulling up your ribs when you are breathless. They will help to pull more air into your lungs but are not strong muscles like the diaphragm so they will tire very quickly. Long term overuse of these muscles can make your neck and shoulders tense and sore and they use up more energy and will then need more oxygen. This can add to your breathlessness.

When you are short of breath you may also breathe faster. It takes more effort to bring the air in quickly and this will use your energy quickly. Imagine trying to blow up a balloon – if you blow slowly and gently it is easier to fill than if you try to fill it quickly. The same applies to breathing and filling your lungs.

It is normal to feel anxious and frightened as your body responds to protect itself, much as when you experience pain. These reactions may also make you breath

faster and your muscles may become tense. This will use up more oxygen increasing your feeling of breathlessness.

Controlling your breathing

This will help to make your breathing more efficient by focusing on breathing from your diaphragm. This will reduce effort and save energy, will help to calm your breathing and help with panic and anxiety. It can be used during or after any activity that makes you breathless.

How to do this

Find a position that is comfortable for you. It is important that you practise this technique when you are not breathless so that you can use it effectively when you need to.

- Place one hand on your tummy, just above your tummy button.
- Relax your shoulders and upper chest.
- Rest your elbows in by your side.
- Release each breath until it comes to a natural end, try and make it last twice as long as your breath in.

NOW YOU ARE PREPARED

- Feel the breathing movement under your hand.
 - Breathe in smoothly, allowing your tummy to rise
 - Take in only the air you need
 - Breathe out, letting your tummy fall.
- As you breathe out it can be helpful to purse your lips, this creates a back pressure that keeps your airways open. Air can then leave your lungs more easily
- At each breath out try and relax your shoulders and upper chest a little more.

Breathing Positions

Forward lean positions fix your shoulders to allow the breathing accessory muscles lift your ribs to pull air in. If you lean forward your diaphragm has more room to move so breathing is more efficient.

In these positions you can use the breathing in the box above to help you gain control. Try to keep your back straight and relax your neck and wrists.

