

Patient Information Leaflet

Breathlessness: Fact Sheet 2

Breathing methods and positions to ease breathlessness

Produced by:
Respiratory Department

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If you are unable to read this leaflet because English is not your first language, please ask someone who speaks English to telephone PALS on 01983 534850 for further information and help.

Polish:

Jeśli nie jesteś w stanie przeczytać tej ulotki bo angielski nie jest pierwszym językiem, poproś kogoś, kto mówi po angielsku, o kontakt telefoniczny z (PALS 01983 534850) aby uzyskać więcej informacji i pomoc

Russian:

Если вы не можете прочитать этот буклет на английском языке потому что не является первым языке, пожалуйста, попросите кого-нибудь, кто говорит на английском языке для телефонного (PALS 01983 534850) для получения дополнительной информации и помощи

Turkish:

Eğer İngilizce ana diliniz değilse, çünkü bu broşürü okumak için yapamıyorsanız, daha fazla bilgi için 01983 534850 üzerinde PALS telefon İngilizce bilen birine sormak ve yardım lütfen

Bulgarian:

Ако не сте в състояние да прочетете тази листовка, тъй като английският не е първи език, опитайте някой, който говори английски, за да телефонирам (PALS на 01983 534850) за повече информация и помощ

Czech:

Pokud nejste schopni přečíst tuto příbalovou informaci, protože angličtina není vaším rodným jazykem, zeptejte se někoho, kdo mluví anglicky na telefonní PALS na 01983 534850 pro další informace a pomoc

Bengali:

আপনি ইংরেজি আপনার প্রথম ভাষা না থাকার কারণে এই লফিলটে পড়তে অক্ষম হন, তাহলে আরও তথ্যের জন্য 01983 534850 নভেগিশেন PALS টলেফি এন ইংরেজি কথা কটে জিজ্ঞাসা করুন এবং সাহায্য করুন

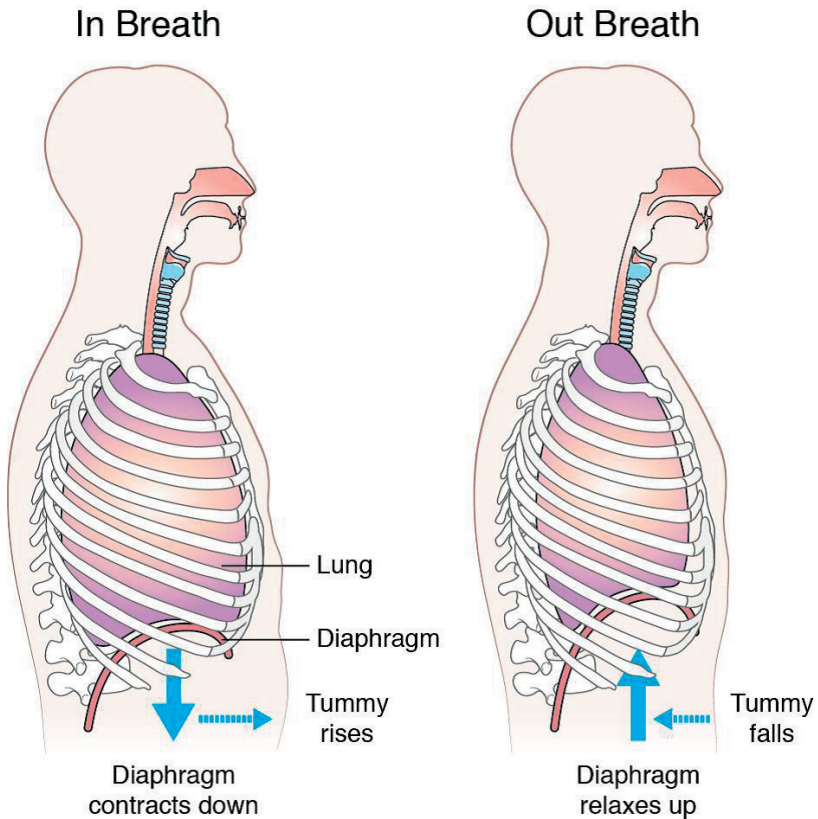
The information given below is designed to help you manage your stable long term breathlessness. If you feel your breathing is getting worse or you are experiencing breathlessness as a new feeling, it is important to seek medical advice from your GP.

Often, breathlessness can lead a person to breathe with their upper chest and shoulders in a rapid and shallow manner. This type of breathing uses a lot of energy, and can cause a range of unpleasant sensations, such as anxiety, numbness or tingling in the fingers, chest pains or aches, headaches, and/or dizziness.

Muscles involved in breathing

The diaphragm

The main muscle of breathing is the diaphragm. This is a large flat sheet of muscle covering the base of your rib cage. As you breathe in, it moves down to help draw the air into your lungs, pushing your tummy forward as it moves. When you breathe out it relaxes, moving upwards, returning to its natural dome shape and allowing your tummy to rest back in. The diaphragm muscle does not tire easily and therefore will move up and down all day, every day without getting tired.



The breathing accessory muscles

There are many muscles around your neck and shoulders with the role of moving your neck and arms. However, when you are breathless these muscles can pull on your upper ribs to help you draw air into your lungs. This is a normal response to breathlessness. These muscles are therefore called breathing accessory muscles.

The main role of breathing accessory muscles is to move the neck and arms. They are not designed to be used for long periods, unlike the diaphragm. Therefore long term overuse of these muscles for breathing can make them become tight, stiff and sore.

Diaphragmatic breathing:

How it works

This way of breathing makes each breath as efficient as possible. It helps you to take in only the air that you need, avoiding unnecessary effort and to working to relax your body as you breathe.

When to use

Diaphragmatic breathing may help you recover quicker from breathlessness after activity. It may also help your breathing to settle if you feel anxious or panicky. You may wish use this breathing method with the hand held fan (fact sheet 3).

How to use Diaphragmatic Breathing

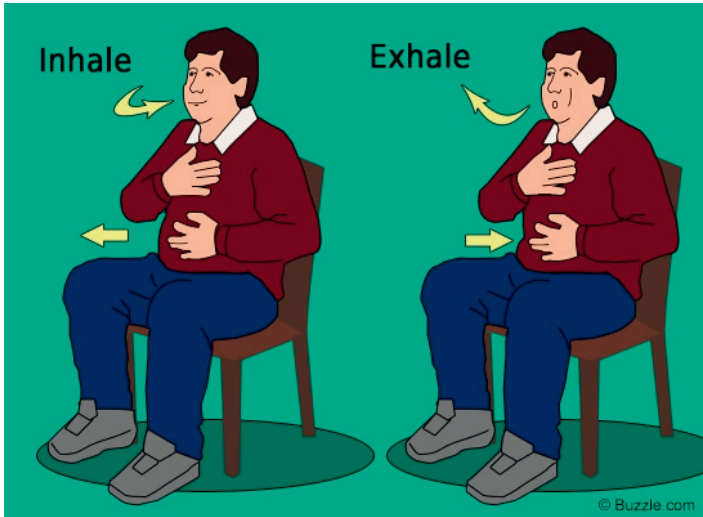
Preparation

- Place one hand on your tummy, just above your belly button and the other hand on your chest.
- Relax your shoulders and upper chest.
- Rest your elbows in by your side.

Spend as long as you need on each of the following points:

- Feel the breathing movement under the hand on your tummy, the hand on your chest shouldn't move.
 - o Breathe in smoothly; allow your tummy to swell.
 - o Take in only the air you need.
 - o Breathe out, relax and let your tummy fall.
- Release each out breath until it comes to its natural end.
- As you breathe out narrow your mouth slightly, if this helps.
- Each time you breathe out; relax your upper chest a little more.

Breathing from your tummy in this way often does not come naturally. It is helpful to practise this. We suggest making 10–15 minutes available twice a day to practise this technique. It is helpful to choose times when you are already feeling calm and relaxed. Breathe gently when practicing; there should only be a slight movement of your tummy at rest and you should be able to do this without making any noise.



Forward lean positions

How they work

These positions optimise the use of the diaphragm and encourage relaxation of the accessory breathing muscles around the shoulders, arms and upper chest.

When to use

Use a forward leaning position to help you recover from breathlessness after activity.

When using these positions try to keep your back straight but let your head drop so your neck is relaxed. Also try to relax your wrists.



Picture taken from www.blf.org.uk

Pursed lips breathing

Some people find narrowing their mouth slightly as they breathe out makes their breathing feel easier. This is called pursed lips breathing. It helps by creating a back pressure that supports your airways open, allowing air to leave your lungs more easily. When practicing pursed lips breathing narrow your mouth gradually until you feel your breathing become a little easier. Pursed lips breathing does not help everybody. Ask your physiotherapist or healthcare practitioner for advice.

Recovery breathing: For severe breathlessness or panic

How it works

The recovery breathing method encourages you to allow time for the air to leave your lungs as you breathe out, therefore creating more room for the next breath in. The aim of recovery breathing is to calm your breathing until you can breathe smoothly and quietly from your tummy.

When to use

Use the recovery breathing method when you feel extremely breathless or panicky. It can be even more helpful to use this technique with a hand held fan (fact sheet 3).

Recovery breathing method

- Take up a forward leaning position.
- Use your hand held fan.
- Focus on the out breath, breathe out onto the fan.
- Don't worry about the in breath; it will take care of its self.
- As you breathe out narrow your mouth slightly, if it helps.
- When you feel ready, breathe out for longer.
- Once your breathing has eased move up into a straight back position.
- Relax your shoulders and upper chest.
- Bring your breathing back to your tummy.
- Stay still for a minute after you have got your breath back before moving.

General advice

- Avoid holding your breath during activities i.e. climbing stairs or bending.
- 'Blow as you go' technique: breathe out during effort i.e. blow out when bending, lifting, reaching or standing up from a chair.
- Avoid rushing. You may want to rush things when you are feeling breathless. Sometimes people believe that if they move more quickly, they will be less breathless at the end of the task. This doesn't work and can actually make breathlessness much worse.
- Pace your breathing i.e. take a breath in and out on each step when climbing the stairs.

Further information

For further help and advice contact the Respiratory Team on **01983 552190, 08:30 – 16:30 Monday to Friday.**

If you require this leaflet in another language, large print or another format, please contact the Quality Team, telephone **01983 534850**, who will advise you.

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If you have any queries or concerns about the content of this leaflet please call (01983) 524081 and ask to speak to the relevant department.

Valuables should not be brought into the hospital. If patients have to bring in valuable items they should ask a nurse to store them safely and request a receipt for the items. You may not be able to have the valuable items returned if the time of discharge from hospital is out of hours.

We are sorry but the Trust cannot accept responsibility for loss or damage to items not given for safe keeping.

You can get further information on all sorts of health issues online at: **www.nhs.uk**

For Health advice and out of hours GP service please call the NHS 111 service on: **111**

We Value Your Views On Our Service

If you wish to comment on the care which you, your relative or friend has received, we will be pleased to hear from you. Please speak to the person in charge of the ward, clinic or service in the first instance or ask them to contact the PALS Team. If you wish to contact them directly, telephone on **01983 534850**.

Alternatively you may prefer to write to:

Chief Executive
Isle Of Wight NHS Trust
St Mary's Hospital
Newport
Isle of Wight
PO30 5TG

You can also share any concerns you have about our services with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) on **03000 61 61 61** or at **enquiries@cqc.org.uk**

All NHS sites are no smoking areas.

If you would like help and advice to stop smoking please call: Freephone 0800 169 0 169 to talk to the NHS Smoking Helpline.