

Patient Information Leaflet

Breathlessness: Fact Sheet 1

Breathlessness: Information and commonly asked questions

Produced by:
Respiratory Department

Date: May 2017
Review due: May 2020



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, попитайте 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 টেলিফোনে ইংরেজি কথা কটে জিজ্ঞাসা করুন এবং সাহায্য করুন

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

Is being breathless harming me?

Breathlessness is not harmful, but it is very unpleasant and frightening. It is important for you to remain as active as your illness allows you to be. This information sheet will help you to manage your breathlessness.

Is there anything I can do to stop myself feeling frightened?

It is very common for people who are breathless to feel frightened and anxious. These feelings can make breathlessness worse. It is important to remind yourself that breathlessness is not in itself dangerous. There are techniques which you can use to help reduce anxiety. These can include relaxation, positioning and breathing exercises. Please ask if you would like more information on these.

What else can I do to help my breathlessness?

Cool air – Cooling your face with cold air or water reduces the feeling of breathlessness. You can use a small hand held or standing fan, or simply a cool draught from an open window. You may prefer to use a cold flannel.

Plan – A very important part of managing breathlessness is to plan your activities. Decide on your priorities and try not to do too much at once or in any one day. Some activities may fill you with dread as you know they are particularly difficult for you. In these cases try to ask for help. This may be frustrating for you, but will allow you to conserve your energy for the things that are important to you and help your confidence.

Pace – Activity may increase your sensation of breathlessness. This is normal. With any activity that you find difficult, such as going upstairs, it is important that you feel in control of your breathing before you start. Allow plenty of time and take breaks, perhaps by stopping on the stairs, when you need to. Pace yourself so that you do not become too breathless. Arrange furniture in convenient places to rest, such as an extra chair in the bathroom or hallway. Tasks involving carrying or bending are often very difficult so ask for help/advice with these.

It can also help to practice breathing control exercises and learn about positions to ease breathlessness.

Some of our other factsheets explain these in more detail – please ask for details.

Remember, it is important to be as active as you can.

Are there any drugs that will help my breathlessness?

Aside from your inhaled medication there are three main families of drugs used to help breathlessness. The most commonly used drugs from these groups are:

- **Morphine:** We usually think of morphine as a drug to treat pain, but it can also be very helpful for breathlessness. You will need a much smaller dose and sometimes you will take it less frequently than when used for pain relief.
- **Diazepam:** Diazepam, also called Valium, is usually used to treat anxiety, but it can also help breathlessness. It is usually prescribed at night as it can make you sleepy. The doctor will often start with a low dose, building up to a higher dose depending on how it suits you.

Will oxygen help me?

When you feel breathless, it often feels like you need “more air” or that you are not getting enough oxygen. This is not always the case and often trying other self management techniques such as using a fan, practising breathing control and positioning can help to recover your breathlessness more quickly.

Oxygen may help breathlessness in some people, but it does not help everyone.

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.