

A Guide for Patients and Families

Tips on Managing Breathing Difficulties

Overview

Many people have difficulties in breathing, especially for those with lung, heart, kidney, and liver problems. Breathing difficulties may make it difficult for your usual daily activities, resulting in poor quality of life. Difficulties in breathing can also make you anxious and making it harder for you to sleep.

Causes

Physical, environmental, psychological, and social factors can contribute to breathlessness.

Common causes include:

- Lung conditions such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, interstitial lung disease, pneumonia.
- Heart conditions such as heart failure.
- Psychological conditions such as anxiety and stress.



Stay calm.



Allow good air ventilation by keeping windows open and switch on the fan to circulate the air.

Sit upright using pillows to support your back.



Wear loose clothes to keep yourself comfortable.

Take your medicines and/or use oxygen therapy as prescribed.



Put things within your reach and rest in between activities to conserve energy.

Relax, such as listening to soothing music, mindfulness, and meditation.



Breathing Techniques

These 2 breathing techniques can also help to relieve breathlessness:



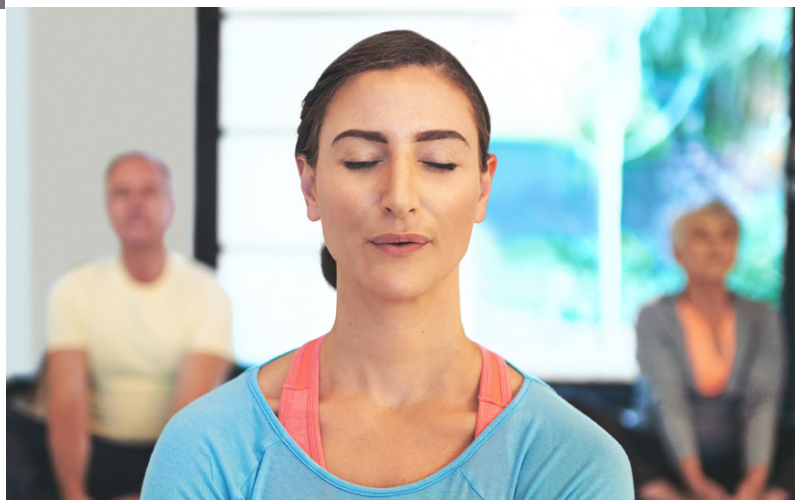
Breathing control

- Relax your upper chest, shoulders, and arms.
- Breathe in through your nose and breathe out.
- Feel your abdomen moving in and out.

Pursed Lip Breathing

Step 1:
Breathe in through your nose.

Step 2:
Breathe out slowly through a small hole between your lips.



Do inform your doctor if the shortness of breath does not get better after you have tried the above.

Should the symptoms worsen, proceed to the Emergency Department or call ambulance 995 for medical help to arrive.