Breathlessness Management

City Hospice
Caring for Cardiff

Breathing Techniques

Different things work for different people. Therefore it is recommended that the following techniques are practised to determine what works for you.

Relaxed, slow deep breathing

Gently breathe in through the nose and breathe out through your mouth for a slightly longer time.

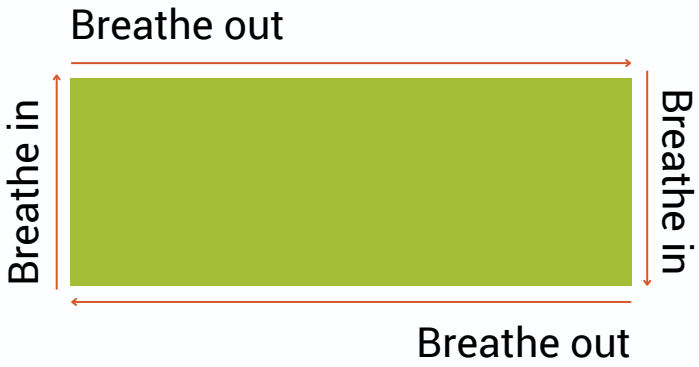
Try not to force the air as this can make you cough, disrupting your breathing patterns and increasing distress.

You can use a rectangular visual guide (such as a TV or picture frame) to help you achieve a pattern of breathing in and out for slightly longer.

Look along the shortest side of the object from one corner to the next- as you do so, breathe in through your nose.

Next look along the longer side of the object and gently breathe out through your mouth.

The pace at which you breathe in and out will be governed by you with an aim to achieve a calm steady pace as time passes.



Watch our video here

Diaphragmatic Breathing

City Hospice
Caring for Cardiff

The diaphragm is a large muscle that sits at the base of the lungs. When a person inhales, their diaphragm contracts and flattens and the chest cavity enlarges. This contraction creates a vacuum, which pulls air into the lungs.

When a person exhales, the diaphragm relaxes and returns to its normal shape, and air is forced out of the lungs. Diaphragmatic breathing, or “belly breathing,” engages the diaphragm, intercostal, abdominal, and pelvic floor muscles.

During diaphragmatic breathing, a person consciously engages their diaphragm in order to take deeper breaths. You will notice your stomach rising and falling. You will also feel an expanding or stretching sensation in the stomach, rather than solely in your chest and shoulders.

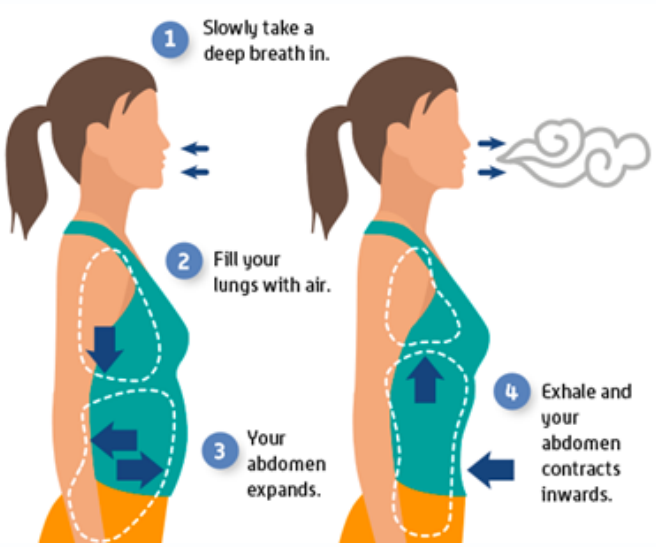
Sitting comfortably in a chair or lying down on a bed:

- Place one hand on the middle of the upper chest.
- Place the other hand on the stomach, just beneath the rib cage but above the diaphragm.
- To inhale, slowly breathe in through the nose, drawing the breath down toward the stomach. The stomach should push upward against the hand, while the chest remains still.
- To exhale, tighten the abdominal muscles and let the stomach fall downward while exhaling through pursed lips. Again, the chest should remain still.



Pursed Lip Breathing

City Hospice
Caring for Cardiff



- Relax your neck and shoulder muscles
- Breathe in for 2 seconds through your nose, keeping your mouth closed
- Breathe out for 4 seconds through pursed lips. A good way to perform this action is to pretend you are blowing out a candle. It may help if you hold your finger up in front of your mouth, imagining it to be a candle.
- If this is too long for you, simply breathe out twice as long as you breathe in.

Blow as you go

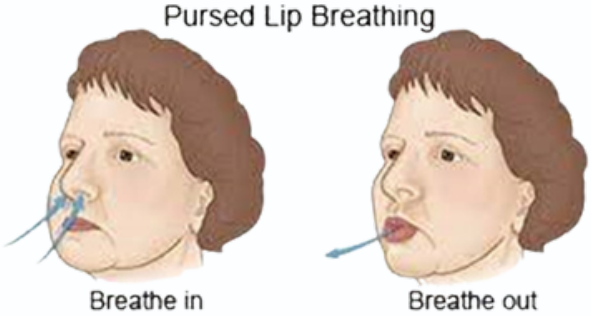
Use this when you are doing something that makes you breathless, such as standing up.

Breathe in before you make any effort and then breathe out when making the effort. Try using pursed lips while you breathe out.

Paced breathing

This can be useful when you are doing something active, such as climbing stairs.

You pace your steps to your breathing. For example, breathing in when on the stair/step and breathing out as you go up one stair/step.



Fan Therapy

City Hospice
Caring for Cardiff

Why does fan therapy help?

There's actually both a physiological and a psychological reason. Physiologically, when cool, fresh, moving air moves over the trigeminal nerve (which covers the nose, lips and side of the face) it can reduce that feeling of breathlessness. But this respite in symptoms can have a big psychological impact on you too, helping you feel like you have a bit more control of your breathlessness – that it's not controlling you quite as much.

It's completely safe to do and you can use the fan for as long as you like – just make sure you keep it at a safe distance from your face.

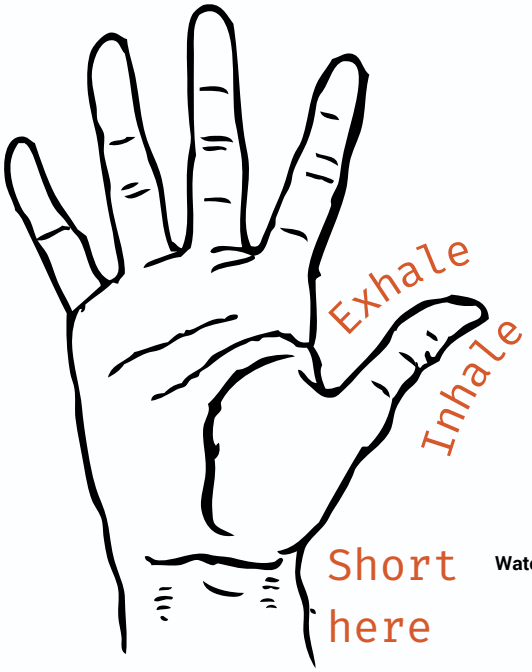
- The recommendation is to use a handheld fan but you can also use a desktop or floor-standing one.
- Make sure you're in a comfortable position – try sitting in a chair with your back supported and lean forward whilst sitting, or you can stand up and lean on a work surface.
- Position your fan about six inches or 15 cm away from your face.
- Try to aim the draft of air towards the central part of your face so that you feel the draught around the sides of your nose and above your top lip. This will ensure the air is hitting that trigeminal nerve.
- You should begin to feel the benefits within a few minutes.



Watch our video here

Hand Tracing

City Hospice
Caring for Cardiff



- Using a finger- trace the outline of your hand
- Breathe in while you travel up your finger
- Breathe out when you travel down your finger
- Complete the process at a comfortable pace- this may be fast initially but begin to slow down at subsequent times.

Watch our

This technique helps to guide you through the process of breathing in and out.

The sensory feedback you get from tracing your hand with your finger will help to calm your breathing.

Looking at your hand during the process gives you something to focus on and avoid distraction

This method can be used at any time or in any location:

- After exertion such as walking up the stairs
- When feeling anxious
- First thing in the morning before you start your activities

Watch our video here