

Coping with breathlessness

Community Respiratory Team



Cambridge, Doddington, Huntingdon and Peterborough 2018



Pride in our older people's and adult community services

Breathlessness

Breathlessness itself is not harmful but can be a frightening and unpleasant experience.

The aim of this booklet is to give you some advice and practical suggestions to help you cope with your breathlessness.

Breathing control

Having control means breathing slowly using the lower part of your chest, whilst relaxing your shoulders.

- Make sure you are sitting comfortably
- Place a hand over your tummy.
- As you take a breath *in* you should feel your hand move outwards
- Now try to relax your neck, shoulders and upper chest, as these muscles tend to be overused when you are short of breath.
- Concentrate on trying to make your breath in shorter than your breath out.

Positioning

Forward leaning in standing, sitting with your forearms on your thighs or on a table puts your diaphragm in the best position to move easily.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

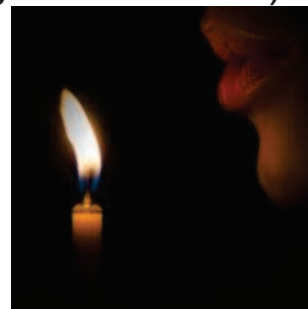
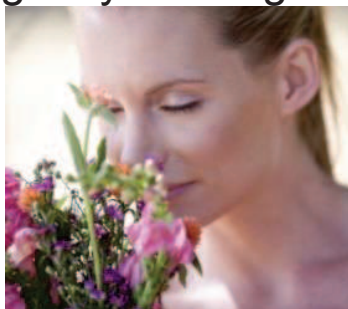


Pictures courtesy of The British Lung Foundation www.blf.org.uk

Pursed lip breathing

This is a technique that will help slow your breathing and is a technique you can use whenever you are doing something that makes your breathless.

- Relax your neck and shoulder muscles
- Take in a normal-sized breath slowly through your nose keeping your mouth closed (imagine you are sniffing a flower)
- Breathe out slowly and gently keeping your lips in this 'pursed' position and try to exhale over three seconds (imagine you are gently blowing out a candle)



Fan therapy



Using a small-hand held fan can help you control episodes of breathlessness. The battery operated three-bladed fans are preferable.

When breathless, turn the fan on and hold it approximately 15cm away from your face. Aim the draft of air

towards the central part of your face so you feel the air around the top of your lip and the sides of your nose. You should feel benefit after a couple of minutes. Continue to practice your breathing control and pursed lip breathing as appropriate in this time.

Distraction



In order to feel in control of your breathlessness it is important to practice the techniques so that they become second nature to you.

The flow diagram on the next page is a very simple and effective 5 step approach to managing your breathlessness.

Practice these 5 simple steps and remind yourself of them by sticking them up around the house.

If it is practiced enough that it becomes an automatic behaviour, you will find you cope better when you become breathless as you have a plan and therefore have more control.

Stop



Position



Pursed lip breathing



Fan therapy



Distraction



Ventolin

For further advice and help with the management of your lung condition, you can be referred to the Community Respiratory Service by any healthcare professional.

For further information about this service please contact:

0330 726 0077

Mon – Fri 8am – 6pm

Email: cpm-tr.communityrespteam@nhs.net
cpm-tr.peterboroughrespteam.@nhs.net

Our aim is to help you to manage your respiratory disease as well as possible. We can do this by helping you to understand your treatment, use your inhalers effectively, and manage your symptoms appropriately.

In an emergency please contact your GP or the emergency services on 111

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Patient Advice and Liaison Service

For information about CPFT services or to raise an issue, contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on Free phone 0800 376 0775, or e-mail pals@cpft.nhs.uk

Out-of-hours service for CPFT mental health service users

Contact Lifeline on **0808 808 2121**

7pm-11pm

365 days a year

If you require this information in another format such as braille, large print or another language, please let us know.



CPFT supports the **HeadtoToe Charity** – visit www.HeadToToeCharity.org for details on how you can help

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