

Managing breathlessness

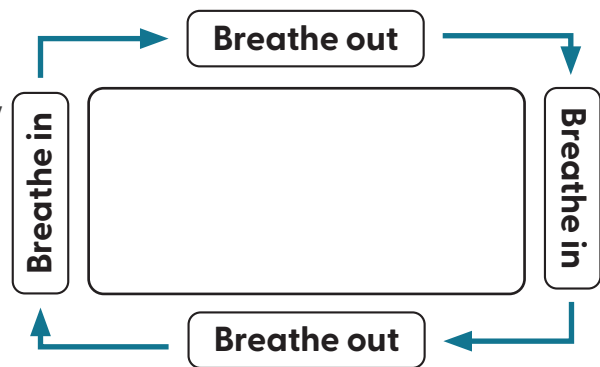
A quick guide on techniques you can use to manage breathlessness.

Handheld fan

Cool air on the face is a way to calm down and relax and can reduce breathlessness. Hold the fan close to your face and mouth, and slowly move the fan from side to side, making sure the flow of air covers your nose, mouth and cheeks. You can also use a fan while using nasal oxygen. You could also try cooling your face with a cool flannel or mist spray.

Rectangular breathing

Use this breathing technique when you are feeling breathless or panicky. Use a rectangle in the room (picture frame, TV screen, window frame etc) and look around the edge of the rectangle, breathing out as your eyes run along the long side and in as you go along the short side, as shown.



Positioning

Certain positions allow the lungs and the muscle around them to work more efficiently and reduce the effort required to breathe. Forward leaning is often helpful, but make sure you keep your chest open by keeping your breastbone lifted up.

Acupressure

Pressure on an acupuncture point at the end of your thumb can help to reduce breathlessness. Hold the pressure on for at least 30 seconds to ease the symptoms, either between your 2nd and 3rd finger or using your other hand as shown:



Medication

There are medications that can help to manage breathlessness, including some that you may take regularly (for example inhalers) and others that you may take as and when you need them. Speak to your physiotherapist or nurse specialist about whether there are any medication changes that could help you.

Pacing, planning and prioritising

Try not to plan to do too much at once, or within one day. Prioritise the activities that are most important to you. Think about things that you could get assistance with, or have equipment that would help (for example a grabber to avoid bending down or sitting to do a particular activity). It is important, both physically and emotionally, to stay as active as you can, within your own limitations.

Relaxation

It is important to find ways of managing both acute anxiety or panic and your day to day levels of stress. Different relaxation techniques work for different people and in different situations. Some people find breathing techniques helpful, others find reading a book or watching a favourite TV show useful. Smell can also be a powerful tool, with things like lavender being quite calming. Others find listening to relaxation techniques such as visualisation or muscular relaxations can be beneficial. Speak to your healthcare team about what might work for you.

We have leaflets with more detail about the above, as well as other ideas for managing breathlessness available, please let us know if you would like these.

Questions

If you have any questions about the information below please contact the Farleigh Hospice advice line on **01245 455478**.

Information adapted from www.supporting-breathlessness.org.uk