



BREATHLESS PATIENT LEAFLET

Breathlessness is an unpleasant sensation associated with difficulty in breathing. It is not in itself dangerous but it can make you feel anxious, frightened, helpless, depressed or angry. It can limit your way of life.

BUT - there are things that you can do to help yourself.

BREATHING EXERCISES TO PRACTICE - SIT WELL SUPPORTED

1. Relax shoulders (lower and loosen)
2. Short breath in, long breath out (concentrate on breathing out)
3. Put your hand on your tummy.

Living with breathlessness:

Practical ideas:

1. **Stairs or gentle slopes:** Breathe in on one step, out on the next step and wait. Then repeat. It may help to place both feet on the same step.
2. **Dressing:** Sit as much as possible and avoid bending.
3. **Arrange the house:** Put items that you use most frequently in easily accessible places.
4. **Planning and placing:** There is only so much you can do in a day. Do the things you want to do first! Plan goals for the future. Walk or talk - remember this applies to those walking with you as well. Balance periods of rest with activity. Gentle exercise helps maintain well-being.
5. **Increase the flow of air around you:** e.g. open a window, use a fan (some people find hand-held fans useful and carry one with them).
6. **Discuss any particular difficulties with others:** They may have helpful ideas, occupational therapists and physiotherapists can provide support, help with breathing exercises and advice on equipment. Ask at your local surgery.



ACTION PLAN FOR BREATHLESSNESS

When you are aware of your breathlessness reaction

- 1 Tell yourself to **stop and respond by pausing**, breath out **S..L..O..W..L..Y** through your mouth.
- 2 **Use positive, reassuring self-talk:** (e.g. 'This will pass', 'Slow down ... calm down' ... 'I can slow my breathing').
- 3 **Sigh slowly and gently:** Letting out a soft sound while you **flop** and **drop your shoulders**.
- 4 Focus on your **slow and gentle out breath** making your OUT breath **twice as long** as your IN breath. Don't think about breathing in ... it will happen naturally.
- 5 **Put yourself in a position that supports your head and shoulders to relax comfortably:** Elbows resting on knees or sit/recline well supported.
- 6 **Remind yourself** 'slow down ... calm, relax ... it will be okay', because **you can** slow your breathing and get enough air. Allow yourself to feel comfortable and at ease.
- 7 **Breathe out S..L..O..W..L..Y** through 'pursed lips in the shape of an 'O' (as if you were going to blow gently through a straw). This helps you breathe out the old air from your lungs making room for fresh air.
- 8 **Continue to breathe slowly and gently**
- 9 Your breathing is slowing allow your mind to focus on a feeling or place that helps you feel comfortable and relaxed. Take your self there while you continue to breath out **S L O W L Y** in a position that is comfortable for you. Let your body become heavy and loose.

When your breathing has settled:

- ❖ Think **about** breathing **in** "smelling the flowers" through your nose.
- ❖ Breathe **out** slowly and softly through your nose **OR** breathe out slowly and softly through your mouth enough to lightly flicker a candle flame.
- ❖ Feel your breathing deep and low in your body.