



Breathlessness Self-Management

A guide for patients, families and friends



The information given below is designed to help your breathlessness. If you feel your breathing is getting worse or you are experiencing breathlessness as a new feeling it is important to seek advice from your GP or health professional.

Relaxed Breathing

It is important to practice relaxing your shoulders. When you are breathless it is natural to have tense shoulders which can make your breathlessness worse.

Positions to ease breathlessness

When to use

These positions may help you to ease your breathlessness at rest and after activity. The most commonly used positions are shown; however, you may find other positions of ease that are not pictured. Experiment with and modify different positions until you find what works best for you.

How positioning helps to ease breathlessness

The positions in this leaflet place the arms so the breathing muscles are in a better position to help with breathing. Leaning forward may also improve the movement of your diaphragm, the main muscle of breathing.

Resting positions

The following positions may help if you are breathless at rest or if you are feeling very tired or exhausted.

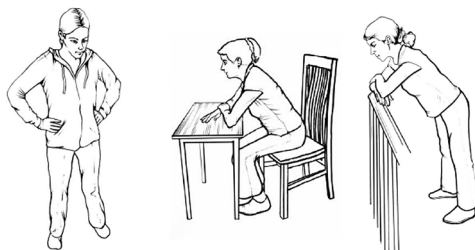


Positions to ease breathlessness following activity

These positions may help to ease breathlessness after you have been active. With all positions try to relax the hands, wrists, shoulders, neck and jaw as much as possible. Experiment with your arm position. Does your breathing feel easier with your hands behind your head or back? Experiment with your arm position. Does your breathing feel easier with your hands behind your head or back?



There is no one position which suits everyone, nor one position which people with a particular condition prefer. Experiment with different positions and find what works best for you.



Use of walking aids

Some people may notice that they are able to walk further and feel less breathless when pushing a supermarket trolley around the shop. Pushing the trolley enables you to maintain a 'forward lean position of ease' while walking. In a similar way, using a walking frame may enable you to walk further and feel less breathless, as well as providing a portable leaning post when you wish to stop and rest. A walking stick can also provide a portable leaning post.



Gutter frame



Rotator frame



Walking stick

When walking outdoors, people often prefer to use a 3 or 4 wheeled walker. Some have a seat so you can sit to rest, others may have a handy storage compartment.

General Advice

- ♥ Avoid breath holding during activities such as climbing stairs or bending.
- ♥ Try to avoid rushing.
- ♥ Try pacing your breathing with your steps, e.g. take a breath in and out on each step when climbing the stairs.

About Saint Francis Hospice

Saint Francis Hospice provides care 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to local people affected by life-limiting illnesses. As a registered charity, we rely on the financial support of our community to keep providing world class care free of charge to individuals and their families. Every year, we provide treatment, care and support to more than 4,000 local people affected by a life-limiting illness.

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The Hall
Havering-atte-Bower
Romford
Essex RM4 1QH

Call: 01708 753319

Email: mail@sfh.org.uk

Visit: www.sfh.org.uk

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