

Patient's name: _____

Physiotherapist: _____

Date: _____

Physiotherapy Department,

St James's Hospital,

Dublin 8.

Phone: 01 - 4162503/4

Opening hours: Monday – Friday,
8.00am - 4:30pm

If you experience pain or any unusual symptoms while performing the exercises contained in this booklet, please consult your doctor or your physiotherapist.

**ST. JAMES'S
HOSPITAL**

James's. St. Dublin 8. Ireland.



Physiotherapy Easy breathing booklet

Physiotherapy Department St. James's Hospital

Why do I get breathless?

- Breathlessness is a common complaint in people with lung disease, anxiety or after surgery.
- Breathlessness is caused by lack of oxygen and/or retention of carbon dioxide in the blood.
- Breathlessness is a useful response to raised carbon dioxide and/or low oxygen as it compensates by shifting more air in and out of the lungs i.e. breathing deeper and more often improving oxygen uptake..

Useful websites:

For additional information please consult some of the following useful websites;

- Irish Society of Chartered Physiotherapists:
www.iscp.ie
- Physical activity guidelines:
www.getirelandactive.ie
- Irish Cancer Society
www.cancer.ie
- Macmillan Cancer Support
www.macmillan.org.uk

Aerobic exercise

Sustained regular exercise such as a walking improves the function of the breathing muscles. It also improves the efficiency of the large muscle groups in the legs at using oxygen. Both of these help to reduce breathlessness.

Your notes

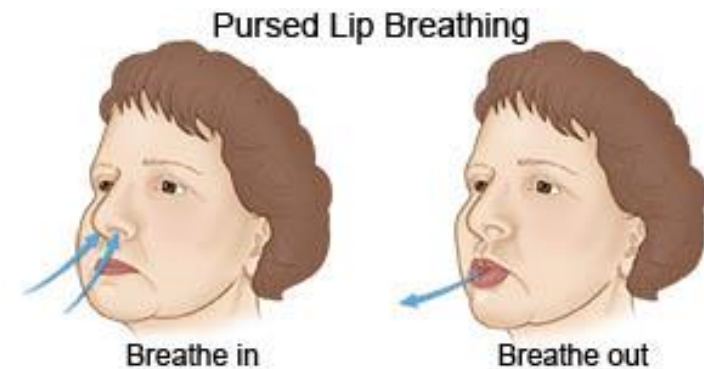
What to do when you get breathless

- Your Breathing Toolkit

- Breathlessness can limit what you can do. It is something that should not control you, instead, you should control it!
- If breathless, stop what you are doing, get comfortable, relax your shoulders and neck and breath slow and low.

1. Pursed Lip breathing

Breathing out through pursed lips (making a small o with your lips) can help reduce breathlessness.



2. Positions of ease

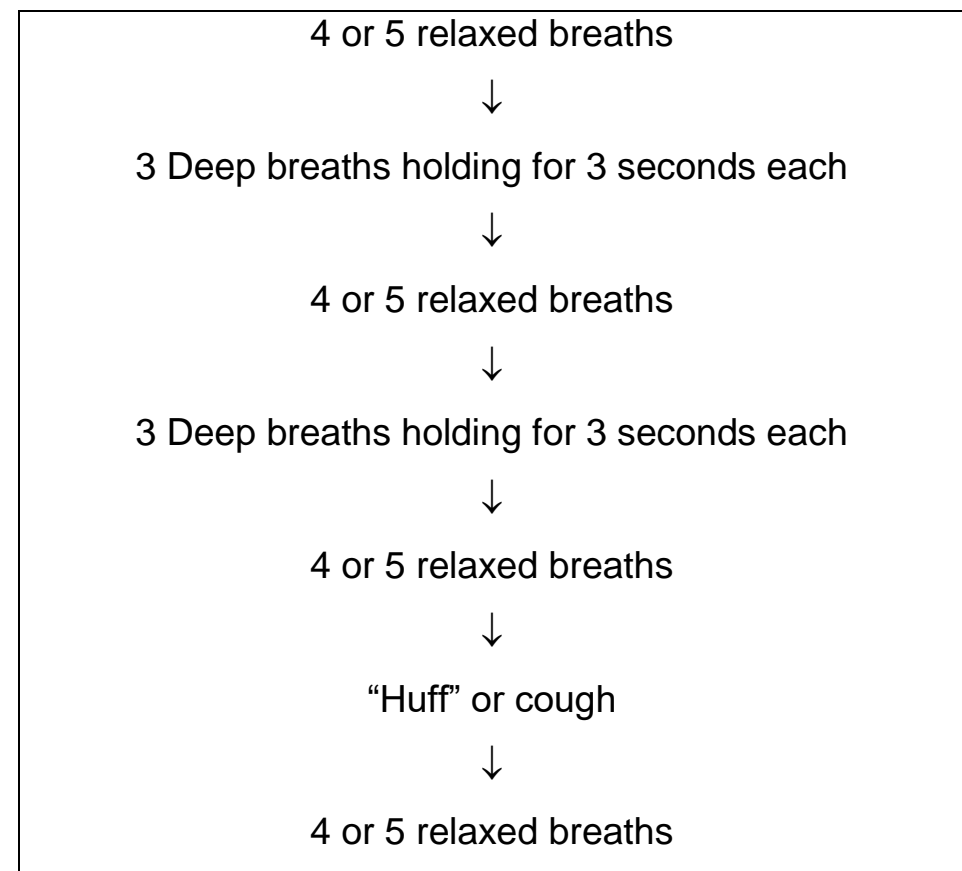
In sitting or standing you can help your breathlessness by getting into a favourable position for your breathing muscle (the diaphragm) to operate.

In Sitting



In sitting, lean forward, resting your forearms on your thighs or the arms of the chair.

Rest some pillows on a table in front of you and lean your forearms on the table with your head on the pillows.



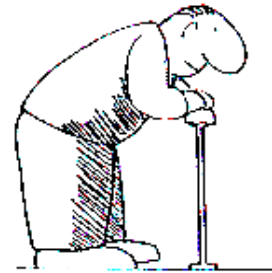
- Do this until you have no phlegm for 2 huffs in a row, once per hour.
- Use a pillow to support your drain or stoma site during a huff or cough.

Active cycle of breathing

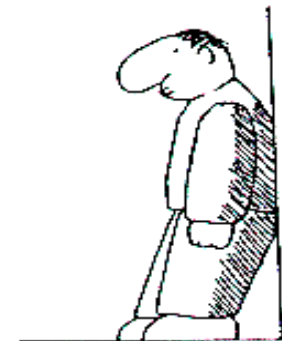
This is designed to fully inflate the sponge-like lung tissue, open up all areas of the lung and help with clearing any mucous/phlegm.

- Get yourself **comfortable** for 3 minutes before you start the exercises.
- Practice **breathing control**: breathe gently and try to feel relaxed and calmer with each breath out. Think about letting the air out gently with your lips pursed (like blowing through a straw). Don't push it out – just let it flow.
- Keep breathing like this at your own rate
- A “huff” is a sharp breath out like fogging up a mirror but much stronger.

In standing



Lean on a walking stick, a window frame or counter top using your arms to support yourself.



Lean with your back against a wall letting your head and arms hang down.

Shoulder, neck and upper back exercises

Breathlessness can lead to “shrugging” of the shoulders which can cause pain and stiffness in the joints of the upper back, neck and shoulders.



- Gently bring your chin to your chest.
- Feel a comfortable stretch in the lower neck.



- Gently extend your neck backward until you face the ceiling.



- Gently turn your neck towards your shoulder.
- Hold for 10 seconds.
- Repeat both sides.

- Gently shrug your shoulders up and roll them backward.
- As you roll your shoulders backward, squeeze your shoulder blades together.



Repeat x10 each, and do this x 3 per day.

Modified BORG dyspnoea scale

Breathlessness is commonly recorded on a scale i.e assigned a level of mild, moderate or severe based on a score from 0-10: The number 0 is when your breathing is causing you no difficulty at all and goes to number 10 where your breathing difficulty is maximal. This scale may help you pace your activities during the day

0	Nothing at all
0.5	Very, very slight (just noticeable)
1	Very slight
2	Slight
3	Moderate <u>Exercise Training Zone</u>
4	Somewhat severe
5	Severe
6	
7	Very severe
8	
9	Very, very severe (almost maximal)
10	Maximal