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MANAGING SHORTNESS OF BREATH IN COPD AND HEART FAILURE

How to Control Your Breathing

The main thing to remember when you become short of breath is to stay calm. This may be difficult for you to accomplish, at first, because gasping for breath can be a frightening experience.
Practice these breathing techniques, for 5 to 10 minutes, several times each day. This will allow you to use them calmly and effectively during periods of distress:

- **Pursed lip Breathing** Pursed-lip breathing is a breathing technique designed to help you control shortness of breathe. Learn to master pursed-lip breathing so you can better manage your life
- **Diaphragmatic Breathing** Slightly more complicated than pursed-lip breathing, diaphragmatic breathing helps strengthen the diaphragm and the abdominal muscles allowing more air to move in and out of your lungs without tiring your chest muscles. Discover the technique of diaphragmatic breathing so you can improve your exercise tolerance and feel better.

Clearing your airways: Controlled Coughing

The presence of mucus in your airways contributes, in large part, to your shortness of breath. If the mucus continues to obstruct your airway, your breathing will become increasingly more difficult and an infection may occur. That's why it is important to know how to clear your airways, which can help you get rid of unwanted mucus. Controlled coughing helps you clear the mucus from your lungs, allowing you to breathe easier.

Here's how to do it:



- Sit upright in a comfortable, quiet place.
- Allow your head to lean forward slightly
- Place your feet firmly on the floor underneath you.
- Using diaphragmatic breathing, inhale deeply
- Try to hold your breath for at least 3 seconds when you inhale.
- Open your mouth slightly, place your hand on your abdomen and, while gently pressing inward and upward against your chest, cough once. The first cough should have moved the mucus to your throat. Now, cough again to remove the mucus from your throat.
- Spit the mucus into a tissue. If the mucus is green, brown, pink or bloody, contact your healthcare provider as this may indicate the presence of an infection or other problems.
- Take a breath and repeat as needed.
- Wash you hands.

- Eat Better

Did you know that some people with COPD require as much as 10 times more calories just to breathe? Eating right can benefit your overall health, and your breathing

- **Maintain a healthy weight and monitor your body weight**

Weighing yourself at least once a week will help you keep your weight under control. If you are taking diuretics or steroids, however. your doctor may recommend daily weigh-ins. If you have a weight gain or loss of 2 pounds in one day or 5 pounds in one week, you should contact your doctor.

- **Drink plenty of fluids**

Unless your doctor tells you otherwise, you should drink 6 to 8, eight glasses of non-caffeinated beverages daily. This helps to keep your mucus thin, making it easier for your body to cough it up. Some people find it easier to fill a container full of their daily fluid requirement in the morning and spread it out during the day. If you try this method, it is best to slow down your intake of fluids towards evening so you are not up all night urinating.

- **Decrease sodium intake**

Eating too much salt causes your body to retain fluid. Too much fluid can make breathing more difficult. To reduce sodium intake, don't add salt when you cook and make sure you read all food labels. If the sodium content in food is greater than 300 milligrams of sodium per serving, don't eat if. If you are thinking of using salt substitutes, make sure you check with your doctor first, as some ingredients in them may be just as harmful as salt.

- **Wear your oxygen canula while eating**

If your doctor has prescribed continuous oxygen therapy for you, make sure you wear your canula when you eat. Since your body requires extra energy to eat and digest food, you will need the additional oxygen. When you use oxygen at home do NOT let people smoke around you as it is a fire hazard. Clean your nasal prongs and canula daily with soap and water.

- **Don’t forget your antioxidant vitamins**

Studies suggest that a diet rich in antioxidant vitamins like D, E, C and A actually improves lung function in people who have COPD. And it has many other important health benefits as well. Have you taken your vitamins today?

So, to sum up:

Try to RELAX and be calm at all times.

Exercise is important, but limit your exercise and walk round your bed.

Keep your windows open and use a fan to flow air across your face.

Discuss your fears and anxieties with your family members and caregivers.

Scan for more resources