

How to Use Your **BREATHLESSNESS EPISODE RECOVERY PLAN**

A guide to planning for breathlessness episodes
with simple, non-medicated strategies

Learn to control breathlessness, so it doesn't control you

For People with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and
their Support Persons

About this Booklet

The Breathlessness Episode Recovery Plan and user guide were created by people living with COPD for people living with COPD.

It was co-designed in partnership with families who support them, healthcare professionals, and researchers from the University of Technology Sydney.

“

We have found this useful
and we hope you do too.

”

A message from people living with breathlessness
and support persons on the co-design team

This booklet guides you on how to make and use a **Breathlessness Episode Recovery Plan**.

What is a Breathlessness Episode Recovery Plan?

A Breathlessness Episode Recovery Plan tells you how to use simple, **non-medicated strategies** to bring your breathing and thinking under control. This can be things like breathing techniques, increasing airflow and self-talk.

You can create this plan yourself or with a health professional. This could be your GP or another doctor, nurse or allied health professional (e.g. physiotherapist or occupational therapist). You can also create this plan with a support person, like a family member or friend.

How is a Breathlessness Episode Recovery Plan different from a COPD Action Plan?

A COPD Action Plan guides you on using medications to **manage a COPD exacerbation or flare-up**. These can happen for a number of different reasons. Sometimes it's due to an infection. Other times it can be due to other triggers like air pollution. If your phlegm has changed in colour or the amount you are coughing up has changed, you are probably having a COPD exacerbation or flare up. If that's happened, and you have a COPD action plan, you should use it.

If you don't have a COPD Action Plan, ask your doctor if this would be useful. You can also find the Lung Foundation Australia's COPD Action Plan on their website. You can print this off yourself and take it to your GP.

Breathlessness can also be caused by medical problems other than COPD. If you have new symptoms, like pain or nausea or something else, that is new or somehow different, you should see your medical team. They can help figure out if you need more tests or different treatments. If you're not sure, it's best to ask them.

However, most episodes of breathlessness will be caused by everyday things like exertion, strong emotions and even changes in the weather. We hope that you can use the breathlessness episode recovery plan to feel better when this happens.

If you don't feel better within 10-15 minutes, think about whether you might be having a flare up or there might be another problem you should talk to your medical team about.

http://

lungfoundation.com.au/resources/copd-action-plan/



Contents

Understanding Breathlessness Episodes	4
Making a Breathlessness Episode Recovery Plan	9
Strategies to Manage Breathlessness Episodes	15
Other Resources	35

Section 1

Understanding Breathlessness Episodes

What is breathlessness?

Breathlessness can be caused by changes in your lungs due to COPD. Some people live with low levels of breathlessness every day. For some people, breathlessness gets gradually worse over months and years. But this doesn't happen to everyone.



What is a breathlessness episode?

Some people have 'episodes' when breathlessness becomes suddenly worse on top of their everyday level.

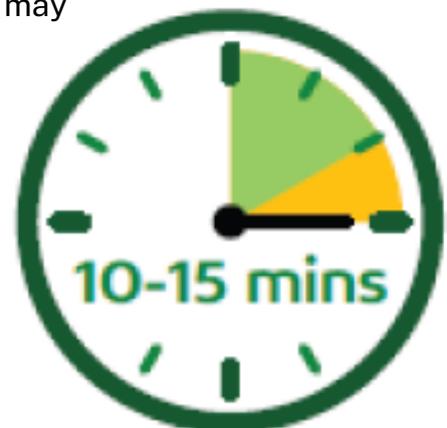
Breathlessness episodes can be frightening, especially if there's no warning.

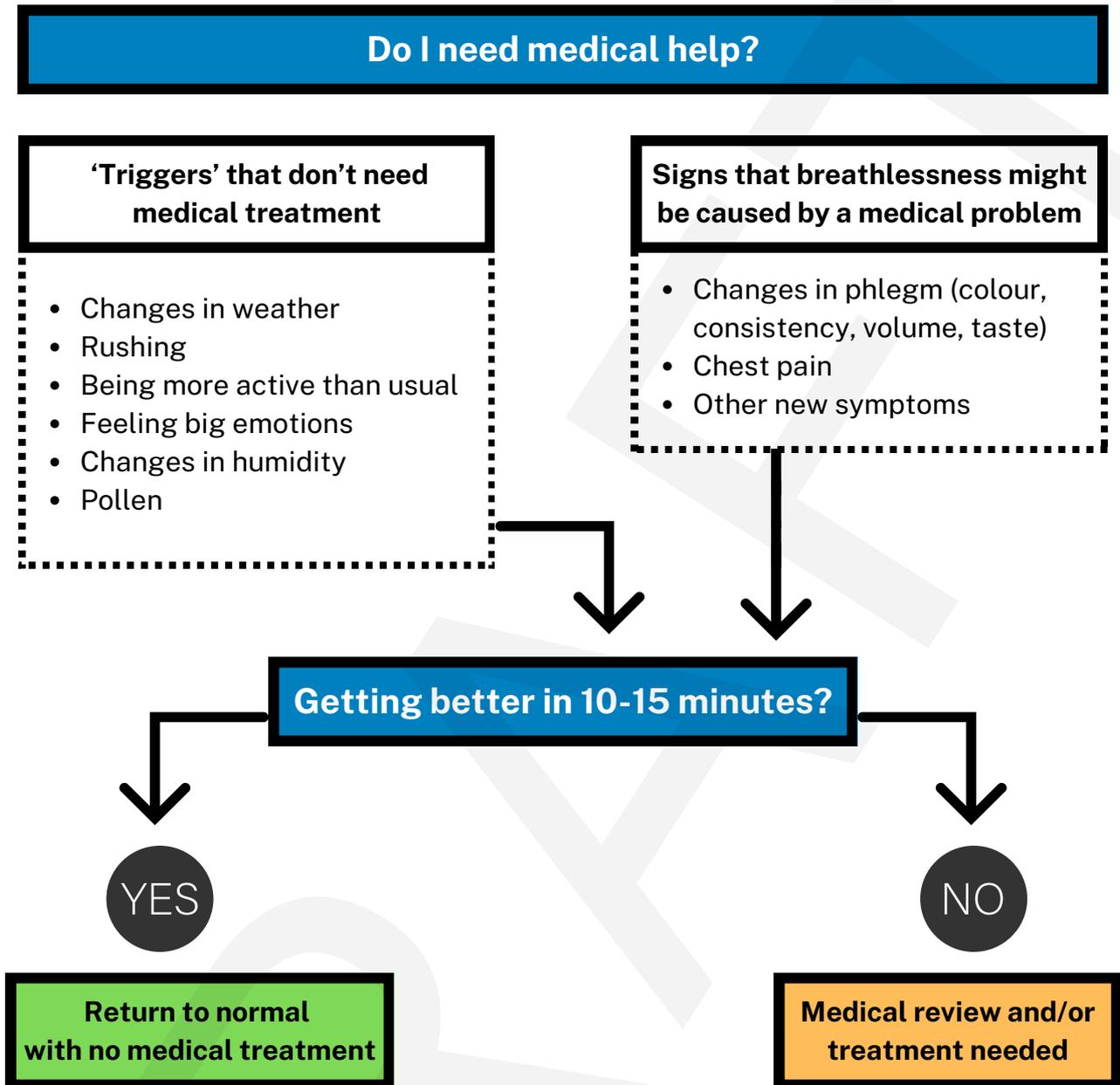
Will a breathlessness episode hurt me?

Breathlessness feels so bad that people may worry they won't get their breath back. It's important to remember breathlessness by itself is not harmful.

A breathlessness episode should get better within 10-15 minutes

If a breathlessness episode lasts much longer, there may be a medical problem that needs attention.





Know Your Normal

Everyone has different breathlessness triggers. Think about what yours are. Most importantly, know what's 'normal' so you know when things don't feel right. It may take time but you will become expert on your breathlessness.

If you can understand it better, it will be less frightening.

On the next page, list any breathlessness triggers you have noticed in the past. You can also use a diary to track your breathlessness episodes and help understand any patterns. You can find one in **Section 4** of this booklet.

My Breathlessness Triggers

List any breathlessness triggers you have noticed in the past. Talk about this with your family and doctor. Update the list at any time.

Being more active than usual or rushing

Is it tying your shoes, hanging out the washing or something else?

Feeling big emotions

Is it frustration, excitement or something else?

Change in weather?

Is hot or cold worse?

Change in humidity

Is dry or damp weather worse?

Pollen

Any plants in particular? What times of year?

Anything else?

“Focus on what you **can** do,
not on what you can't.”

John | Person living with breathlessness from COPD



**Planning for breathlessness will
give you confidence to do more.**

Don't stop doing things you enjoy from fear of
breathlessness.

It will make you unhappy.

And if you don't use it, you lose it.

Instead, make a Breathlessness Episode
Recovery Plan so you can carry on despite it.

Section 2

Making a Breathlessness Episode Recovery Plan

Your Breathlessness Episode Recovery Plan has 3 main parts

1 Take Back Control

‘Do Your Five’

This is a short list to help you take back control in-the-moment. There are only 5 key points that are easy to practise and remember.

Put the steps in the order that works best for you.

When you feel your breathlessness get worse, lift your hand and go through the steps.

Putting up your hand can also let others know that something’s going on. It tells them not to talk to you, so you can save your breath and concentrate.

-  **Stop**
-  **Think**
-  **Position**
-  **Breathe out slowly**
-  **Airflow | Cool**
-  **Take back control**



Specific Strategies

Sometimes you or someone else may need a reminder of what specific strategies work for you.

You can use the examples provided or **write your own** in each section for 'Stop', 'Think', 'Position', 'Breathe out slowly' and 'Airflow|cool'.

When you first make your plan, read through **Section 3** of the user guide. You will find more examples of strategies written in boxes like this:



When you fill out this section of your plan, it might look something like this:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stop what you're doing	<i>Self-Check > Does my breathlessness</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Take a moment	<i>feel different to usual?</i>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I know it will go away	<i>> "I will be able to get my breath back"</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> I can do this - I am doing it now	<i>> Block out distractions</i>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Flop and drop shoulders	<i>> Rest your elbows and forearms on</i>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lean forward	<i>your knees</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Pursed lip breathing	<i>> Focus on the out-breaths, the in-</i>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Breathing around the rectangle	<i>breaths will take care of themselves</i>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Use a handheld fan	<i>> Open a window</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Wipe a damp cloth on my face	
Other strategies that work for me are:	

2 Decide Next Steps

After you've spent **10 to 15 minutes** following your Breathlessness Episode Recovery Plan, ask yourself:

Am I getting better?



Yes

Return slowly to normal activity

I am feeling better because:

- My breathing is calmer
- I feel less panicky
- I'm back to my normal

Take it slow and pace yourself. You need time to recover. When you're feeling well enough, reflect on what happened.

If your breathlessness isn't getting better after 10-15 minutes, start your COPD Action Plan if you have one.

Not really

Refer to your COPD Action Plan

If I have one, I keep it here:

On top of the microwave

If you don't have a COPD Action Plan, ask your doctor if you need one.

Where do you keep your COPD Action Plan – on the fridge or in a drawer? Write it here so you don't have to remember when you're breathless.

Seek medical advice

If I'm not sure what to do, I'll call a healthcare professional from my list of contacts

Write details of people to call on page 2 of your plan. Ask family or a friend to call on your behalf.



Medical contacts

Healthcare Professional
Contact 1

Name *Sarah Khan*

Phone *0436 724 398*

Job *COPD Nurse*

Helped write the plan?



Personal contact for emergencies

Name *Harry Jones*

Phone *0489 768 543*

Relationship *Son*

Helped write the plan?

Seek emergency care

If I feel extremely unwell, I'll dial **000** for an ambulance.

If everything that usually works hasn't helped, there may be a medical problem that needs treatment.

3

After a Breathlessness Episode

When you're feeling better, turn to **Page 2** and plan for next time. You may not need to do this every time.

Reflect

What made your breathlessness worse?

What triggers were there?

Think back to what you were doing and how you were feeling.

What techniques worked well?

Take note of these for next time.

What techniques didn't work well?

Think about why and what you can change.

What did others do that was helpful or not?

Let people know what worked. Tell them what to do differently next time.

Record

It can sometimes help to record your breathlessness episodes. This can help you, any healthcare professionals and your support persons see patterns over time.

In **Section 4**, there is a diary you can use to help you do this.

Revise and Update

You may need to make changes to your plan sometimes.

Write down when your plan was last updated. This will help you and your support persons keep up-to-date.



Date your plan was last updated

14

/

7

/

2024

Practise Your Strategies!

The more you know what to do, the quicker you'll take back control during a breathlessness episode!



Print multiple copies of your plan and place them around the house. Give copies out to your family and friends.

Working Together with Your Support Person

Talk to family and friends about how they can help. Over time, support persons become expert and may notice things that you miss.

If you change your Plan, let everyone know so they are up-to-date.

For Support Persons



You can help someone create a Breathlessness Episode Recovery Plan in these ways:

- Talk to the person to understand what has worked in the past to manage their breathlessness.
- Ask them how they would like to be helped during a breathlessness episode, so you know what to do if it happens.

For example, some people prefer to be reassured during a breathlessness episode with a calming hand on their shoulder. Other people prefer to be left alone.

Some people like to copy someone else doing breathing techniques. Others don't.

- You may also help by getting their fan, inhaler or oxygen, or by keeping other people away.
- A lot of people with COPD say they can't 'think straight' when they're having a breathlessness episode. If this is the case, agree who will decide about whether to call for medical assistance – them or you.

Section 3

Strategies to Manage Breathlessness Episodes

Strategies to manage your breathlessness episode can include things to help you:

	STOP	Page 17
	THINK	Page 18
	POSITION	Page 24
	BREATHE OUT SLOWLY	Page 29
	Increase AIRFLOW COOL your face	Page 33

From the following section, pick and choose specific strategies to write in your Breathlessness Episode Recovery Plan. These strategies have been included in boxes like this:

strategy 1

strategy 2

strategy 3

All the strategies included in this section have been shown to work by research or recommended by health professionals or people with COPD.

You can put the steps in the order that works best for you. Not all of the strategies listed will work for you and that's okay.

You may have other strategies that you can write in instead.



STOP

STOP can mean something different to everyone and a few examples are provided below:

Stop what you're doing

Slow Down

Take a Moment

When you STOP, it can help people around you understand that something is going on. You may need some space and it can let people know you need to deal with things yourself for a moment.

It can also be used to tell people not to talk to you, so you can save your breath. This can help you concentrate and figure out your next steps.



THINK

During a breathlessness episode, it's common to feel frightened or to have unhelpful thoughts that can add to the panic. Strategies to manage your thinking can include:

- Self-checking
- Positive self-talk
- Remembering key facts about breathlessness rather than myths
- Using relaxation
- Using distraction
- Creating a calm environment
- Using other ways to make you feel safe and in control

Self-Check

Self-checking means becoming aware of things that need your immediate attention.

Self-check

Ask Yourself:

- Have I taken my routine medication(s) today?
- Have I checked my oxygen supply? (If relevant)
- Does my breathlessness feel different to usual?
- Have there been changes in my phlegm - its colour, amount, consistency or taste?
- Are my ankles swollen?
- Do I have chest pain?

Add your own 'self-check' questions:

- _____
- _____
- _____

Positive Self-Talk

You can reassure yourself in-the-moment with some of the statements below.

You can also make your own 'mantra' that works for you.

It will pass

My breathing will calm down

Stay Calm

It will be okay

I have had this feeling before

I am safe

I have managed this before, I can do so again

I know it will go away

Nothing awful is going to happen

I can do this - I am doing it now

I don't need to be frightened

I know I can get my breath back, I am going to be okay

Remember, I can recover from breathlessness

Breathlessness with activity is normal

It may take time, but it will pass

Remember Key Facts About Breathlessness and Address Myths

The following address unhelpful ideas some people have about breathlessness.

Breathlessness is not bad for me

I will be able to get my breath back

Being breathless doesn't necessarily mean I need more oxygen

I'm not going to pass out

My heart is beating hard and fast and that is normal when I am active

Relaxation Techniques

Using relaxation techniques can calm your mind. The techniques below have been suggested by people with COPD.

Close your eyes

Imagine yourself on a slowly moving escalator

Imagine yourself somewhere relaxing

Focus on a positive feeling

Think about what you can smell

Think about what you can hear

Think about what you can see

Self-soothing

Meditate

Rock yourself slowly

Breathe in time to the music

Pray

Imagine your worries as bubbles in fizzy water- let the bubbles rise to the surface and burst.

Stroke your pet

Distraction Techniques

Distracting yourself during a breathlessness episode can help some people take their mind off what is happening. Some of the following suggestions may help you:

Open & close your fists while counting to 50

Do a crossword

Count backwards from 87 in intervals of 5

Recite a poem

Count backwards from 200 to 1

Read a book or magazine

Listen to music or the radio

Listen to or watch TV

Focus on an object & describe it to yourself

Look at pictures

Sit outside and listen to sounds around you

Look outside

For each letter of the alphabet, think of a colour, a name or something of your choice

Distracting yourself doesn't work for everyone. Some people may even find the opposite helpful - focusing on their breathing, while doing a calming activity they enjoy.

Here the aim is to distract from anxiety rather than breathlessness.

Create a Calm Environment

What's happening around you can affect you during during a breathlessness episode. You can use the following strategies to create a calm environment for yourself:

Clear the room of onlookers

Ask for personal space

Block out distractions

Turn off the TV or music

Other Ways to Promote Feelings of Safety and Control

Having a breathlessness episode can be scary. Feel safer by doing one of these:

Tell someone around you what's happening

Have someone sit with you

Phone family or friends for help

Before a breathlessness episode happens, decide which family members or friends can support you best. Talk to them about your plan ahead of time. This will help you avoid calling someone unexpectedly when you're feeling panicked.

For Support Persons



Help someone manage their thinking during a breathlessness episode in these ways:

- Write a checklist of things you can do to help and go through it with them.
- Don't dismiss how they feel – breathlessness can be truly horrible. Instead, provide reassurance that they will recover.
- Ask the person if they want you to provide a back, arm or hand massage
- Talk them through a happy and relaxing memory you share or you know they cherish.
- Model a breathing technique (see 'Manage Your Breathing' section) and have them follow along.
- Just sit quietly as someone who cares and is not panicking.
- Try and be a calming presence and don't get frustrated or frightened yourself.

Remember to follow the lead of the person with breathlessness. When they recover, ask if they want you to do anything differently next time.



POSITION

Breathlessness episodes can happen standing up, sitting down or even lying down.

For all of these, you can adjust your position to help you breathe better.

There is no one position that's better for everyone. Try different ones to find out what works best for you.

Below are some key things to do:

Loosen tight clothing

Keep your shoulders down

Lean forward

Support your elbows and arms

Loosen Tight Clothing

It may be helpful to loosen clothing, particularly around your shoulders and neck. Depending on the climate, you may also need to consider how you will keep warm.

Keep Your Shoulders Down

Some people raise their shoulders when breathless, but this makes breathing more difficult. Try and get in a position where you can:

Flop and drop shoulders

and

Keep your elbows low

When Standing Up

To help keep your shoulders down while standing, one of the following can help:

Tuck your thumbs in your belt loops

Rest your hands on your handbag

Put your hands in your pockets

Lean Forward | Support Your Elbows and Arms

When Standing Up

Bend at your hips to lean forward. To support the weight of your upper body, you can **lean over the following:**

Back of a chair

Kitchen counter

Table

Windowsill

Walking frame

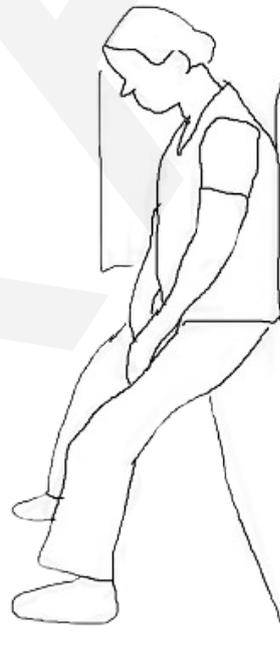
Shopping trolley

Fence or railing



If you can't lean forward while standing up:

Lean back against a wall, with your feet shoulder width apart



Images on this page have been adapted from [information leaflets](#) developed by the Cambridge Breathlessness Intervention Service, Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 0QQ

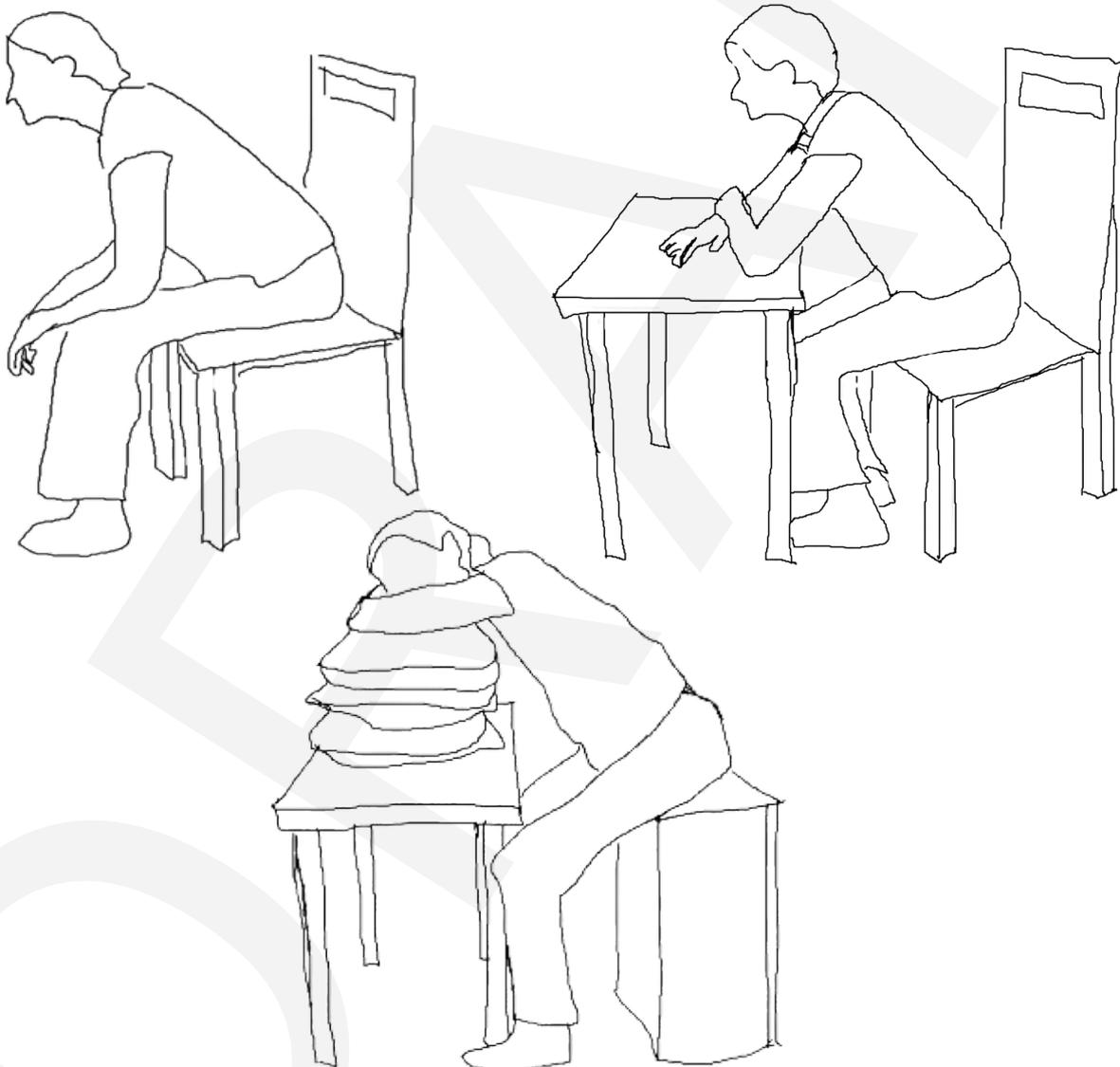
When Sitting Down

If you are able to sit down or already sitting, sit up straight in a chair with your feet wide apart. Keep your shoulders down, lean forward and support your arms in one of the following ways:

Rest your elbows and forearms on your knees

Lightly stretch your arms in front on a table

Pile pillows on a table in front, then rest your head and arms on them



Images on this page have been adapted from [information leaflets](#) developed by the Cambridge Breathlessness Intervention Service, Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 0QQ

When Lying Down

Try the following if you are sick in bed or wake up breathless.

Lie on your side, not your back or front. Bend your hips and knees slightly.

Use pillows or cushions to:

1. Raise your head and shoulders
2. Support your hips and knees
3. Relax your shoulders and hands, by placing your top arm on a pillow in front



Images on this page have been adapted from [information leaflets](#) developed by the Cambridge Breathlessness Intervention Service, Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 0QQ

For Support Persons



You can help someone adjust their position during a breathlessness episode:

- Lead the person to a chair and help them sit down. This also reminds them to stop what they're doing.
- If their shoulders are up, remind them to drop their shoulders by gently touching them.

Remember to follow the lead of the person with breathlessness. When they recover, ask how you can help more next time.



BREATHE OUT SLOWLY

When people get breathless, they tend to focus on getting 'air in' and forget about breathing out.

But in COPD you need to get the old air out, so there is room for fresh air to come in.

Otherwise, you will end up shallow breathing very fast and getting frightened because you can't take deep breaths in.

This means it is important to take **long out-breaths** and **slow your breathing down**.

This is why a health professional may tell you the following:

Focus on the out-breaths, the in-breaths will take care of themselves

Techniques to Breathe Out Slowly During a Breathlessness Episode

These breathing techniques help you to breathe out slowly during a breathlessness episode.

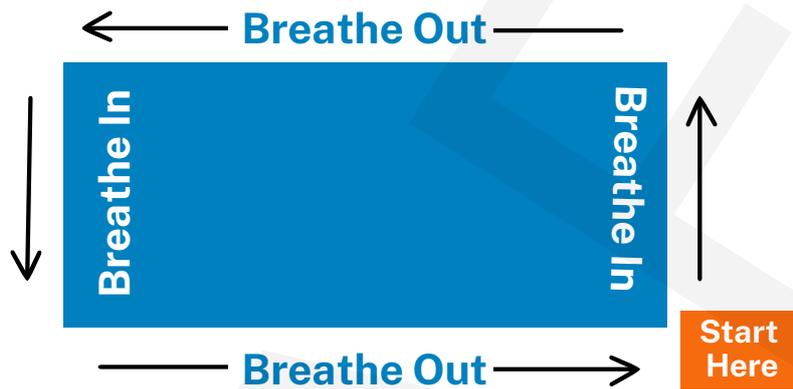
They are both similar and can be used together.

Breathing Around the Rectangle

Pursed Lip Breathing

Breathing Around the Rectangle Technique

1. Think of a rectangle. You can use something that you see, like a window, TV, phone, or even your Breathlessness Episode Recovery Plan.
2. Breathe in along the short side of the rectangle to the count of 2.
3. Breathe out along the long side of the rectangle to the count of 4.



Pursed Lip Breathing Technique

1. Breathe in through your nose or mouth - Only breathe in through your nose if it's comfortable.
2. Breathe out gently with pursed lips - like flickering a candle with your breath but not putting it out.

To help you do this, imagine doing something like the following suggestions:

Smell the roses, flicker the candle

Gently blow a dandelion

Blow out through a straw

Blow bubbles

Blow out like you're trying to whistle



Techniques to Help with Everyday Breathlessness

Some breathing techniques are useful to practise everyday. They can help prevent your breathlessness getting worse, particularly while doing an activity.

If you're having trouble, talk to your doctor, nurse or physiotherapist and they can help you.

Blow As You Go Technique

If you're bending, lifting or reaching for something, don't hold your breath. Instead:

1. Breathe in before making the effort.
2. Breathe out while making the effort.

You can combine this with other breathing techniques, such as pursed lip breathing.

Paced Breathing Technique

You can use this technique while you're active, such as walking or climbing stairs. Match the rhythm of your movement with your breathing.

1. Breathe in for one step.
2. Breathe out for your next two steps.

Count longer or shorter steps, depending on what feels comfortable.

Tummy Breathing or Breathing Control Technique

Breathing with your tummy or belly is better than with your chest. Practise this breathing technique when you're sitting and resting.

1. Sit with your back well supported.
2. Place a hand on your tummy.
3. Relax your shoulders.
4. Breathe in gently through your mouth or nose and feel your tummy move out.
5. Breathe out gently through your mouth or nose and feel your tummy move in.
6. You can combine this technique with the pursed lip breathing technique.

Advice on Airway Clearance

For some people more advanced breathing techniques may be necessary. If **phlegm** is a problem for you, see your doctor or physiotherapist for management advice. They will guide you through specific airway clearance techniques that may work for you.



AIRFLOW | COOL

There is good medical evidence that cool air directed at your face can help reduce breathlessness.

It can also be helpful to cool your face or neck.

You can do the following to help with this.

Use a handheld fan

Use a ceiling fan

Use a pedestal fan

Use the air conditioning

Open a window

Open a door

Wipe a damp cloth on your face

Go outside

Put a damp cloth around your neck

Remember - use these cooling techniques with your breathing techniques and also when adjusting your position.

For Support Persons



You can help someone during their breathlessness episode in the following ways:

- Know where they keep their handheld fan and bring it to them.
- Make sure their handheld fan is always charged or has batteries.
- Open the door to the room they are in to promote a breeze.
- Open a window for the person, if it is okay to do.
- Put on the air conditioning or fan, if it is okay to do.
- Get the person a damp cloth to cool their face or neck with.
- Help them get outside slowly and make sure there's somewhere for them to sit down.

Remember to discuss what works best for someone after they recover. They may not be able to tell you in-the-moment.

Section 4

Other Resources

My Breathlessness Episode Diary

Tracking breathlessness episodes can help you understand patterns.

But remember – an increase in breathlessness episodes is not a bad thing in itself. You might get breathless because you’re getting more active, which is a good thing.

This booklet won’t stop breathlessness episodes but it will help you manage them better.

Discuss the diary with your family and doctor or nurse. They might notice patterns that you don’t.

Breathlessness worse than normal?

For ‘worse than normal’ some people like to just say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ while others use a numbering scale like this:



How confident did you feel managing it?

You can use a scale like this and circle the number to track your confidence:



Date	Time	How often during the day?	Worse than normal?	Trigger?	How confident did you feel managing it?	Comments
					1 😞 2 😟 3 😐 4 😊 5 😄	
					1 😞 2 😟 3 😐 4 😊 5 😄	
					1 😞 2 😟 3 😐 4 😊 5 😄	
					1 😞 2 😟 3 😐 4 😊 5 😄	
					1 😞 2 😟 3 😐 4 😊 5 😄	
					1 😞 2 😟 3 😐 4 😊 5 😄	

Date	Time	How often during the day?	Worse than normal?	Trigger?	How confident did you feel managing it?	Comments
					1 😞 2 😟 3 😐 4 😊 5 😄	
					1 😞 2 😟 3 😐 4 😊 5 😄	
					1 😞 2 😟 3 😐 4 😊 5 😄	
					1 😞 2 😟 3 😐 4 😊 5 😄	
					1 😞 2 😟 3 😐 4 😊 5 😄	
					1 😞 2 😟 3 😐 4 😊 5 😄	

Getting the Most Out of Life Despite Breathlessness

“It will take longer to do simple things, but **it’s okay**.
Seize the day - something great might happen!”

Maureen | Person living with breathlessness from COPD

Pacing Yourself

Breathlessness and tiredness are two sides of the same coin. You can keep on top of both by pacing yourself like a runner in a race.

Practising pacing until it becomes a habit will help you do more in life.



Plan

Plan what you want to do to avoid rushing or doing too much at once.

Think about the coming week or month, not just today. Space tiring activities out, with rest days in between. Plan tasks for times when your breathing is usually better, like afternoons instead of mornings.

Check the weather forecast and plan to do less on very hot or cold days.

Emotions can also affect breathlessness. Many people feel frustrated at having to do things slowly. This can make breathlessness worse so try to stay calm. Even getting excited, like seeing grandkids, can make breathlessness worse.

Slow down tasks and break them into smaller steps spaced out over time.

Prepare

Prepare your activities to make them as easy as possible.

If you get breathless walking to the letter box, put a chair half way so you can get your breath back.

See 'using aids' for more ideas.

Prioritise

Think of your energy like a bank account. You only have so much to spend. What activities are worth spending it on, and what is just a waste?

Remember - there's always tomorrow to do it.

Talk to family and friends to set expectations. Sometimes family might expect too much of you. Or they might do everything for you because they're worried you will become breathless. Aim for a 'sweet spot' that's not too much or too little. This will keep you fit but not wear you out. Agree with family and friends which activities you want to do and which you want help with. Some activities are worth getting tired out for, and some aren't. But they might not know what matters most to you. For example, getting tired during visits from friends or family might be OK if you can rest the next day.

After a breathlessness episode, take time to recover before going back to normal activity.

To find out more about conserving your energy, refer to **page 55** of the '*Better Living with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease*' booklet.

http://



<https://lungfoundation.com.au/resources/better-living-with-copd-booklet/>



Using Aids

Using aids isn't giving in to breathlessness—it's finding ways to out smart it so you can do more of the things you enjoy.

A four-wheeled walker isn't just for the frail. It can help you walk further and faster. Get one with a seat you can sit on if you become tired. You won't worry about getting stuck and can push yourself to go further. A basket is a handy spot for your Breathlessness Episode Recovery Plan and hand-held fan.

At a shopping centre use a trolley to lean on.

A shower chair can save energy and lets you scrub your feet without bending over. If using a towel makes you breathless, try a terry towelling bathrobe that dries without effort.

You can buy household gadgets that will also help. For example, an electric can opener or a foldable stool to sit on while cleaning low areas.

Ask to be referred to an **Occupational Therapist** for more tips and tricks – they can come to your house to come up with more ideas to make life easier!

Eating

It is important to maintain a healthy weight. Being underweight or overweight can make breathlessness worse. Seek a referral to a **Dietitian** for further advice.

Also ask for help if you get breathless during meals. A **Speech Pathologist** can teach you helpful swallowing techniques.

To find out more about healthy eating and swallowing, refer to **chapters 15 and 16** of the '*Better Living with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease*' booklet.

http://



<https://lungfoundation.com.au/resources/better-living-with-copd-booklet/>



Exercise and Pulmonary Rehabilitation

Many people reduce or avoid activities that make them breathless, sometimes without noticing.

But the less you do, the less you will be able to do. The more active you are, the less breathless you will become over time. Exercise strengthens the muscles that help you breathe.

Pulmonary rehabilitation programs teach you how to exercise safely at a level that's best for you. They are run by **Nurses, Physiotherapists** or **Exercise Physiologists** who are experts in exercise for people with COPD.



To find out more about exercise and physical activity, refer to **chapters 10 and 11** of the '*Better Living with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease*' booklet.

<https://lungfoundation.com.au/resources/better-living-with-copd-booklet/>

To find a **pulmonary rehab program** close to you, visit:

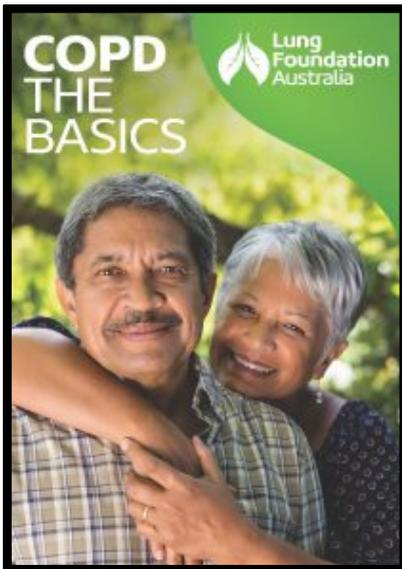
<https://lungfoundation.com.au/find-a-service/pulmonary-rehabilitation/?service-card=3>



Information for People with COPD

Resources to Help Manage Your Condition

Learning the Basics of COPD



If you have been recently diagnosed with COPD, refer to the **'COPD: The Basics'** booklet to learn more:

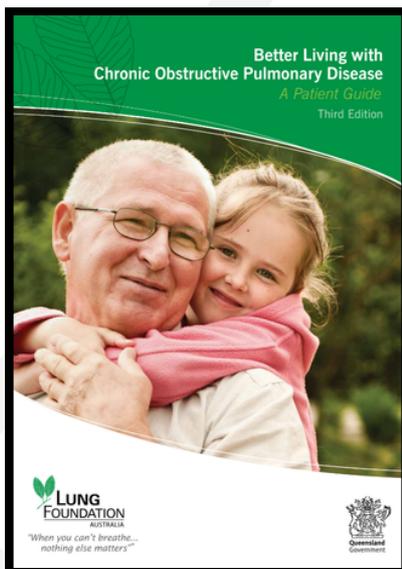
<http://>



<https://lungfoundation.com.au/resources/copd-the-basics-booklet/>



Better Living with COPD



For more detailed information about COPD and how to manage it, refer to the **'Better Living with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease'** booklet:

<http://>



<https://lungfoundation.com.au/resources/better-living-with-copd-booklet/>



Remaining Active

Pulmonary Rehabilitation Programs



To find a **pulmonary rehab program** close to you, visit:



<https://lungfoundation.com.au/find-a-service/pulmonary-rehabilitation/?service-card=3>

'Lungs in Action' Classes

To find a **Lungs in Action class** close to you, visit:



<https://lungfoundation.com.au/patients-carers/support-services/lung-disease-and-exercise/lungs-in-action/>



Who to Contact

Information & Support Centre | Lung Foundation Australia

To connect with an expert nurse or social worker, call or visit:



1800 654 301



<https://lungfoundation.com.au/patients-carers/support-services/support/>

Peer Support Options | Lung Foundation Australia

To find options for **Peer Support**, visit:

 <https://lungfoundation.com.au/find-a-service/peer-support-groups/?service-card=1>



My Aged Care

To learn about accessing Australian Government-funded aged care services, call or visit:



1800 200 422 

 <https://www.myagedcare.gov.au/>

HealthDirect Helpline

To access 24-hour health information and advice, call or visit:



1800 022 222 

 <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/>

Quitline

To access support and advice to help quit smoking, call or visit:



13 78 48 

 <https://www.quit.org.au/>

Information for Support Persons

Resources to Support Someone with COPD

Supporting Someone with Breathlessness



To find help and advice for supporting someone with breathlessness, visit:

<https://supporting-breathlessness.org.uk/>

Who to Contact

Carer Gateway

To access emotional and practical services, call or visit:



1800 422 737



<https://www.carergateway.gov.au/>

Version 5.0 [5/02/2026]

Support for Carers | Services Australia

To learn about payments and services available to support you and the person you care for, visit:

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/getting-support-if-youre-caring-for-someone?context=60097>



Notes

DRAFT

1

Breathlessness episode recovery plan for people with COPD

A non-medicated approach to taking back control

If my breathlessness starts to get worse, I'm going to:

The **specific strategies** below help me manage my breathlessness.
Use *examples* from the user guide that have helped other people, or write your own ideas.

	Examples	Write your specific strategies here:
 Stop	<input type="checkbox"/> Stop what you're doing <input type="checkbox"/> Take a moment	
 Think	<input type="checkbox"/> I know it will go away <input type="checkbox"/> I can do this - I am doing it now	
 Position	<input type="checkbox"/> Flop and drop shoulders <input type="checkbox"/> Lean forward	
 Breathe out slowly	<input type="checkbox"/> Pursed lip breathing <input type="checkbox"/> Breathing around the rectangle	
 Airflow Cool	<input type="checkbox"/> Use a handheld fan <input type="checkbox"/> Wipe a damp cloth on my face	
 Take back control	Other strategies that work for me are:	

?
Decide next steps
Turn to the back page

Learn to control breathlessness, so it doesn't control you



Do your five

An easy way to remember your plan is 'Do Your Five'.

Put the steps in the order that works best for you.

Hold up your hand to tell people you need some space.

2 Decide next steps

Am I getting better?



Yes

Return slowly to normal activity

I am feeling better because:

- My breathing is calmer
- I feel less panicky
- I'm back to my normal

Not really

Refer to your COPD Action Plan

If I have one, I keep it here:

Seek medical advice

If I'm not sure what to do, I'll call a healthcare professional from my list of contacts

Seek emergency care

If I feel extremely unwell, I'll dial **000** for an ambulance.

3 Reflecting on your breathlessness episode

When you're feeling better, plan for next time

Reflect

- What made your breathlessness worse?
- What strategies worked well?
- What strategies didn't work well?
- What did others do that was helpful or not?

Record

Some people may find the 'Breathlessness Episode Diary' in the user guide helpful to see patterns over time.

Revise and update

If needed, update the strategies in your plan. Ask a healthcare professional for help and practice new strategies before your next episode.

To learn more



Scan here to access the 'How to Use Your Breathlessness Episode Recovery Plan' booklet

To find out more about how this plan was designed, visit www.uts.edu.au/breathe

Name



Date your plan was last updated

 / /

Remember to discuss updates with people who support you.



Medical contacts

Healthcare Professional

Contact 1

Name

Phone

Job

Helped write the plan?

Healthcare Professional

Contact 2

Name

Phone

Job

Helped write the plan?



Personal contact for emergencies

Name

Phone

Relationship

Helped write the plan?

Do your five



Version 5.0 [5/2/2026]

 Lung
Foundation
Australia

Am I getting better?

Decide next steps



✓ Yes

Return slowly to normal activity

✗ Not really

Refer to your COPD Action Plan

Seek medical advice

Seek emergency care

When you're feeling better, plan for next time



Scan here to access
the 'How to Use Your
Breathlessness Episode
Recovery Plan' booklet

Scan the QR code to watch a video on how to create a Breathlessness Episode Recovery Plan.

