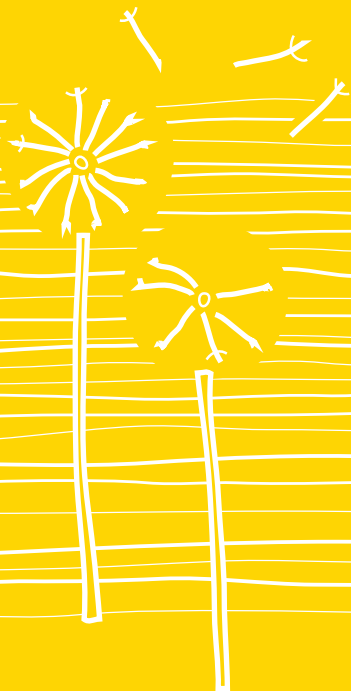


Managing breathlessness

A guide to breathing techniques, medication
and other things that can help



**Marie
Curie**

Care and support
through terminal illness

*Calls are free from landlines and mobiles. Your call may be recorded for training and monitoring purposes.

Introduction

If you have breathlessness, this booklet may be helpful for you. It's aimed at people with a life-limiting or terminal illness and may be helpful at any stage of your illness. We know that breathlessness can have a big impact on your life. There are lots of people who can support you and things you can do yourself to manage breathlessness.

Your family and friends may also find this booklet useful. If you have any questions or concerns about breathlessness, speak to your healthcare team. They will be able to support you. You can also contact our Support Line on **0800 090 2309*** for practical information and emotional support.

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Understanding breathing

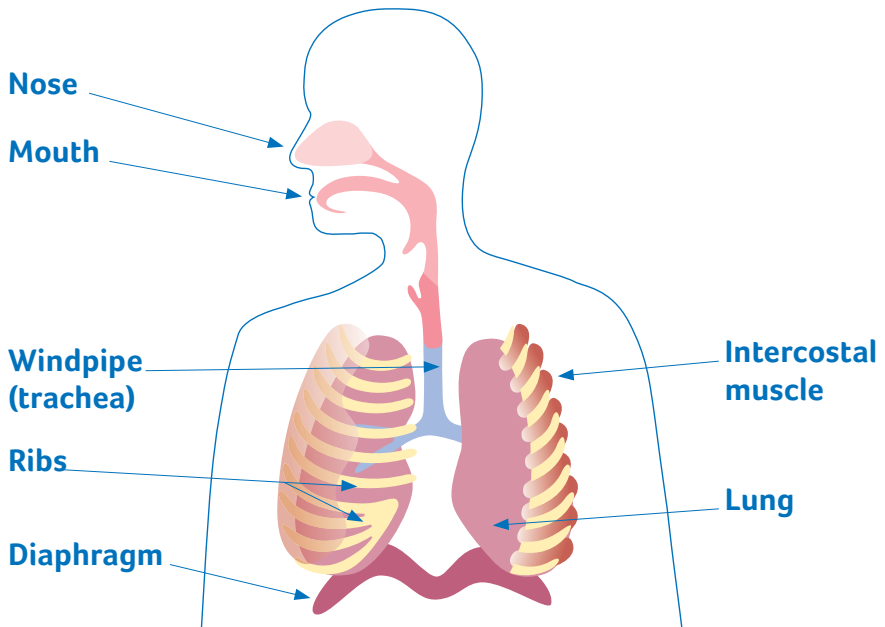
Most of the time we don't think about breathing. It happens automatically. But if you have an illness that causes breathlessness, breathing can become a big effort. It can help to know how the lungs work so you can understand why you might feel breathless and what can help.

Our bodies need a constant supply of oxygen to function. Oxygen is the fuel which helps our muscles work. If our muscles don't get enough oxygen, we become breathless.

When we breathe in, air passes through our mouth or nose, and into our windpipe (trachea). The windpipe splits into two smaller tubes which go into each lung. When we breathe in (inhale), our chest and lungs expand. When we breathe out (exhale), our lungs get smaller again. We have a large muscle which sits just under the lungs called the diaphragm (dye-uh-fram). The diaphragm helps to draw air into the lungs and allows the lungs to expand. We also have muscles between the ribs (intercostal muscles) which help the chest to expand and let air into our lungs.

When you're relaxed and breathing is easy, you use the diaphragm and intercostal muscles to breathe. When breathing becomes harder, muscles in the shoulders and chest can help too but they get tired quickly.

All of these body parts working together is called the respiratory (breathing) system.



What is breathlessness?

Breathlessness, or shortness of breath, is an uncomfortable feeling of being out of breath. Breathlessness can be caused by your illness. Even if you're having the best treatment for your illness, you may still feel breathless. This is known as long-term (chronic) breathlessness.

Breathlessness is different for everyone. Some people have breathlessness all the time. Other people have episodes of breathlessness that last for a short time. These might be caused by activity or feeling anxious, or it might happen without any obvious reason.

When I started having breathlessness it was scary, but it didn't last long. You get to know your limitations and then you don't push yourself too hard.

Gerard, living with breathlessness

How might breathlessness affect you?

Breathlessness can affect every aspect of your life. Living with breathlessness can be challenging. Many everyday activities can make you feel breathless, such as walking, getting dressed, climbing stairs, having a shower or doing housework. If breathlessness makes it hard to do your usual activities you might have to ask any friends, family members and professionals to support you more (see page 26).

Breathlessness can feel frightening. It's common to feel worried or panicky when you feel breathless. There's more information on ways to manage these feelings on page 15.

At first, I couldn't even carry on a conversation. Talking was an effort. I would even cut a phone call short when I couldn't keep going.

Gerard, living with breathlessness

What causes breathlessness?

Breathlessness can happen when any part of the respiratory (breathing) system isn't working properly.

Speak to your doctor or nurse if you feel breathless. They'll be able to find out what's causing it and recommend the best ways to manage it. They can also give you treatment for reversible causes, such as infection. Sometimes breathlessness continues even after an illness has been treated. Tell your doctor or nurse if you experience this as there are treatments to help.

The lungs

Illnesses such as COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), pulmonary fibrosis and lung cancer affect the lungs themselves.

The muscles

Illnesses which affect your muscles, such as motor neurone disease (MND) and multiple sclerosis (MS), can cause breathlessness.

The heart

If your heart isn't able to pump blood around your body as well as it should, there's not enough oxygen getting to your muscles. This can make you feel breathless when you're doing even gentle physical activity. Heart failure can also sometimes cause fluid to build up in the lungs (pulmonary oedema).

Chest infections

Infections in your lungs and airways can cause breathlessness for a short time. Usually, your breathing goes back to normal once the infection is treated.

Low levels of red blood cells (anaemia)

Red blood cells carry oxygen around the body. If you have anaemia, there aren't enough red blood cells to carry the oxygen and you can feel breathless.

Anxiety

Feeling anxious or panicky can make you feel breathless. Anxiety can make you take quick, shallow breaths. This means that you don't get enough air into your lungs. This can make you feel more anxious. Some people describe it as a vicious cycle.



Layton Thompson/Marie Curie

Feeling breathless can make you feel anxious. You might have worrying thoughts when you feel breathless such as “I feel like I’m going to die” or “I don’t want anyone to see me like this.” This can make you feel anxious and panicky. And this can cause physical changes in your body that make it harder to breathe. For example, it can be hard to take a deep breath using your diaphragm.

There are tips on how to manage anxiety on page 15.

Fatigue

Many people who have breathlessness also experience fatigue. Fatigue is a feeling of extreme tiredness, weakness or lack of energy. It’s different to normal tiredness. It doesn’t go away after rest or getting a good night’s sleep. When your body is feeling weaker, you might not have enough energy to do your usual activities. This can mean that you feel breathless even when you only do a small amount of activity. Keeping active can help to keep your muscles strong. Read more on page 20 about ways to stay active.

We also have a booklet, ***Managing fatigue*** which you can order for free at mariecurie.org.uk/publications or by calling our Support Line on **0800 090 2309***.

What can you do to manage breathlessness?

There are lots of things you can do to help manage breathlessness. You can try the suggestions in this booklet by yourself. You can also ask your doctor or nurse if there is a breathlessness service in your local area. See page 26 for more information on getting support.

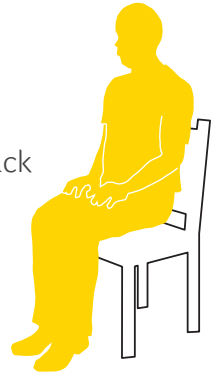
Breathing techniques

There are different breathing techniques you can try to control your breathing when you feel out of breath. You might find that some of them work better than others for you. You can try these breathing techniques yourself. If you need any extra help, ask your physiotherapist, doctor or nurse.

Breathing positions

Some positions can make it easier to fill your lungs with air when you breathe in. Below are some positions that you might find helpful. Not every position will work for everyone. Try them out and see what works best for you.

1. Sit upright in a chair with your back against the back of the chair and rest your hands on your thighs.



2. Sit on a chair leaning forward with your forearms resting on your thighs.

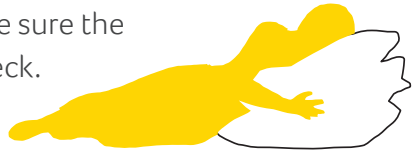
3. Sit or stand leaning forward with your arms resting on a ledge, for example a chair or table.





4. Lean back against a wall with your feet placed a comfortable distance from the wall and slightly apart. Relax your shoulders and let your arms hang down by your sides, or rest them in your pockets.

5. If you're in bed, you can lean back against a few pillows so that you're sitting upright. Or you can lie on your side with a few pillows under your head and shoulders. Make sure the top pillow supports your head and neck. A V-shaped pillow can be helpful.



Once you're in one of these positions you can try breathing control techniques.

Breathing control

Breathing control means using techniques to breathe gently, using the least effort. Using breathing control will help when you are short of breath or feeling anxious. Breathing control techniques can help to let more air into your lungs and allow you to feel more in control of your breathing.

Pursed-lip breathing

Pursed-lip breathing is a technique that can be used at any time to help you control your breathing. You can also use it while you're doing something that makes you feel breathless. It can help you to feel less short of breath.

Here's how to do pursed-lip breathing:

- Get into a comfortable position for your breathing (see page 12).
- Breathe in gently through your nose.
- Purse your lips as if you were going to whistle.
- Blow out with your lips pursed when you breathe out.
- Do this gently for as long as it feels comfortable.
- Don't force the air out of your lungs.

This can take some practice. It might help to try it when you're not feeling breathless, so you know what to do when you feel out of breath.

Blow as you go

This breathing control technique helps you to breathe easier while doing activities. You can use it while you're doing something that makes you breathless. Blow as you go means:

- Taking a breath in just before you make the action.
- Then breathing out while making the action. It can be helpful to use pursed-lips when you blow out.

This can be useful for an activity that feels like an effort, such as:

- stretching your arms above your head to reach for something
- reaching or bending down
- lifting something heavy
- climbing stairs
- standing up.

Using a fan

A draft of cool air across your face can help you to feel less breathless. A small hand-held fan is cheap and you can carry it around so you have it whenever you need it. When you're inside, it might be helpful to open a window as long as it's not too cold outside. You could also have a desk fan, or stand-up fan to create a draft of air in the room.

Your fan should be positioned so that the air is hitting one side of your face just in front of your ear. The fan can be used alongside breathing exercises to help you slow your breathing rate and recover from an episode of breathlessness more quickly.

Managing anxiety

If you feel anxious or panicky when you get breathless, trying some relaxation techniques might help.

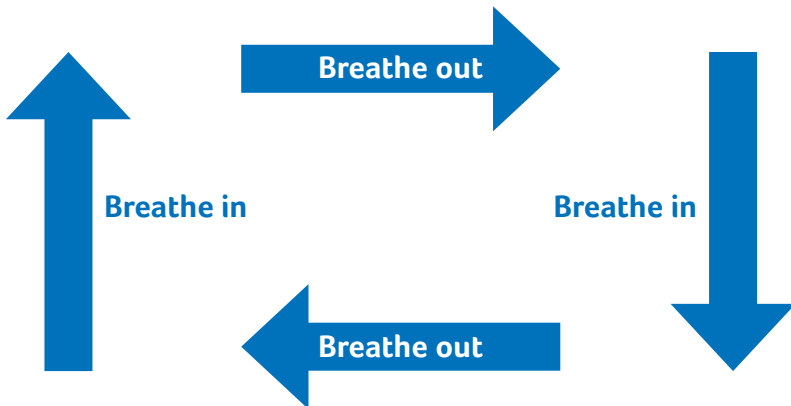
Using a fan when you feel anxious can also help you to feel more in control.

Square breathing

Square breathing is an exercise that can help get your breathing under control when you're feeling anxious. You need to concentrate on the exercise, so it helps to distract you from feeling worried:

Imagine a square or rectangle. Or you can look at a square or rectangle that's in the room, such as a TV screen or picture frame.

- ↑ Breathe in and imagine going up one side of the square.
- Breathe out and imagine going along the top of the square.
- ↓ Breathe in and imagine going down the other side of the square.
- ← Breathe out and imagine going along the bottom of the square.



Keep breathing in and out in this way until your breathing feels under control.

Try breathing in for four seconds, and out for four seconds and see how it feels. You might find it more comfortable to take shorter or longer breaths. As you get used to the technique, try blowing out for longer than you're breathing in.

Anxiety support

If you're finding it difficult to cope with anxiety, you might find it helpful to talk to someone you trust. This could be a friend, family member or your doctor or nurse.

You can also contact our Support Line on **0800 090 2309*** for practical information and emotional support.

Your doctor or nurse can prescribe medicines to help, and they can refer you to a different professional for more support. A counsellor or psychologist can help you understand and work through your feelings.

Counselling is a talking therapy that is sometimes free at hospices, hospitals or GP surgeries. If this is something you want to try, ask your doctor or nurse. They can let you know what talking therapies are available locally and can help you decide which treatment is best for you. For more information about free counselling services, speak to your GP.

You may also be able to get private counselling which you have to pay for. For more information, ask your doctor or visit the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy website to find a qualified counsellor near you (see page 32).

Relaxing

Finding ways to relax can help you to manage breathlessness and anxiety. Try to find time to relax every day. You might find it helps to do breathing exercises, listen to music or an audiobook, spend time outside, have a bath or try meditating.

Making the most of the energy you have

The five Ps – prioritising, planning ahead, pacing, positioning and permission – are a good way to make the most of the energy you have. This means you don't feel breathless as quickly when doing activities. This is especially helpful for people who have fatigue as well as breathlessness.

You can read more about making the most of the energy you have in our booklet, *Managing fatigue*.

You can order our free booklets at mariecurie.org.uk/publications or by calling our Support Line on **0800 090 2309***.

Prioritising

If you don't have enough energy to do all the things you used to do, think about the things that are most important to you.

Make a list of the activities you want to do and select the ones that are most important. Try to include enjoyable and relaxing activities as well as work and chores.

Planning ahead

Spread your tasks throughout the week rather than doing them all in one day. Each day, think about how you'll spread your activities throughout the day. This allows you to recover after doing each task. Some people find it helpful to use a diary to plan ahead. There's a diary you can use on page 34.

I know I'm getting close to using up my energy stores when I start to feel frustrated. That's when I need to stop and have a break.

Gerard, living with breathlessness

Pacing activities

Many people find it hard to slow down when they used to move at a faster pace. Try to take your time when you're doing activities. Remember that you may have to ask for help to do some tasks and that's OK. Listen to your body and try to understand your limits.

Positioning

Getting into a comfortable position can save you energy. For example, sitting down to chop vegetables or sort out your laundry uses less energy than doing it standing up. When doing any activity with your arms it's useful to sit with your arms resting on a table. This reduces the amount of work that your muscles are doing. This means they don't need as much oxygen, so your lungs don't have to work so hard.

Permission

Give yourself permission to do things differently from before. This might mean taking rests between activities or asking for help for something you used to do by yourself.

Even if you plan ahead you won't always have enough energy to do the things you want to do. Be kind to yourself and try not to worry if you don't get through all your activities in a day.

We all have off days. When you have cancer or a long-term illness, those off days will look a bit different.

Deborah, Occupational Therapist (OT)



Eating well

If you get breathless while you're eating, these changes to your diet might help:

- Take your time while you're eating.
- Try softer, moist foods like soups, smoothies and pureed foods that are easier to chew and swallow.
- Try eating smaller meals and having snacks throughout the day.

Physical activity

Many people find it hard to do physical activity because they feel breathless. But keeping active can help improve your fitness and can actually help your breathing. Physical activity could include walking, gardening or swimming. Or it could be moving your arms and legs in bed, or practising sitting to standing movements. A physiotherapist can give you a programme of exercises designed specifically for you. Some hospitals and hospices run exercise groups designed for patients who are breathless (see page 27).

When you're doing physical activity:

- You should still be able to talk in short phrases as you exercise. If you can't do this, slow down until you recover your breath.
- Try controlled breathing exercises (see page 13) to manage your breathing while you exercise.

Becoming breathless when you're exercising can be unpleasant but it's not usually harmful and it should settle with rest after a few minutes.

Smoking

Smoking can make breathlessness worse. If you smoke and want support to stop or cut down, ask your doctor or nurse. They can discuss a range of different ways to help you to stop. The NHS website has more information on getting help with stopping smoking.

Medicines for breathlessness

There are many different medicines that can help with breathlessness. Good control of breathlessness can be achieved by having the right medicines and using the techniques suggested in this booklet. Some medicines help to manage the illness that's causing your breathlessness, and some medicines help reduce the feeling of breathlessness. Ask your doctor or nurse about the best medicines for you.

Medicines which help to manage your illness

Depending on the illness or illnesses you have, your doctor may prescribe some of these medicines.

Bronchodilators

These are medicines that expand the airways to let more air in. Bronchodilators can be taken as inhalers, nebulisers and tablets.

A nebuliser is a small machine that turns medicine into a fine spray so you can breathe it in. You breathe in the medicine through a face mask which is connected to the machine by a tube.

Some bronchodilators work slowly and have an effect over a long time (long-acting). Some work quickly and only have an effect for a short time (short-acting). A commonly used short-acting bronchodilator is salbutamol. This comes in a blue inhaler and is sometimes called a 'reliever'. You can take it when you feel breathless and it gets to work quickly.

Steroids

Steroids, for example dexamethasone or prednisolone, reduce inflammation (swelling) in the airways to help let more air in. They can be taken as tablets or inhalers.

Saline (sterile salt water)

Saline can be breathed in through a nebuliser. It helps with breathlessness and it loosens any sticky mucus (phlegm) so that it's easier to cough up.

Diuretics (water medicines)

Diuretics are medicines that help remove excess water. They can be helpful for people with heart disease or lung disease, where this has affected how well the heart pumps. The excess water is filtered by the kidneys and passes out in your urine. These can help if your breathlessness is caused by a build-up of fluid.

Oxygen therapy

Oxygen therapy can be helpful for some people who have breathlessness, but it's not suitable for everyone. Oxygen therapy is helpful for people who have an illness that causes low levels of oxygen in the blood. Breathing in air with added oxygen increases the level of oxygen in the blood. This helps to reduce feelings of breathlessness. If oxygen therapy might help you, your doctor will discuss it with you.

If you have oxygen therapy, your home will be checked to make sure it's safe. It's not safe to use oxygen if you or someone else smokes in your home as it can increase the risk of fires.

Oxygen can be given at home using a machine called a concentrator. An oxygen concentrator is a small machine which takes room air and passes it through a filter. This increases the amount of oxygen in the air you breathe. Concentrators can be fixed in one room in the house, or you can carry it with you around your home and outside as well.

Oxygen can also be supplied in cylinders. These are metal containers containing oxygen at high pressure.

You breathe in the oxygen through a face mask or thin plastic tubes that sit just under your nostrils (nasal cannulae). The tube connects to the oxygen cylinder or concentrator.

If you're active, you can take your oxygen supply with you. Ask your doctor or nurse about getting a special backpack or trolley. If you use a wheelchair, the oxygen cylinder can be attached to your wheelchair.

Medicines which help to reduce the feeling of breathlessness

These medicines can help you to feel less breathless.

Morphine

Morphine-like medicines are well-known as painkillers, but research has shown that they may also help reduce the sensation of breathlessness. You may therefore be prescribed a morphine-like painkiller (opioid) to help with breathlessness, even if you don't have



Brian Morrison/Marie Curie

pain. They can be taken as a liquid, tablets or as an injection under the skin.

Medicines for anxiety

Medicines that help anxiety, like lorazepam, may help you get back in control if your breathlessness is making you feel panicky. If you're feeling anxious most of the time, medications which can help with anxiety and depression, such as mirtazapine, may be helpful.

There's a whole toolkit of ways to manage breathlessness. Medicines can be some of your tools. It's all about finding what works best for you.

Ann, Physiotherapist

Complementary therapies

Some people find that complementary therapies such as acupuncture, reiki and massage make them feel more relaxed, and this can help with breathlessness. Speak to your doctor or nurse before you have complementary therapy. They can advise you on the safety of different types of therapy. Some complementary therapies might not be suitable or safe for you, depending on your health condition and treatment.

Some complementary therapies are provided free of charge by the NHS, but they are not always available. Speak to your doctor or nurse about what's available in your area. Your local hospice or a local support group may also offer free or reduced cost therapies. You can also get complementary therapies privately, but you will have to pay for these. Private therapists can be expensive, so it's worth checking the cost first.

It's also important to tell the complementary therapist about your medical condition and any treatments that you've had or are having. They can make sure the therapy is suitable for you.

For more information about complementary therapies visit mariecurie.org.uk/complementary-therapies

Getting support

If you need extra help to manage your breathlessness, there are lots of professionals who can support you. Your GP, hospital team or local hospice will be able to refer you to other professionals.

Your GP or hospital doctor

Your GP or hospital doctor can help find out what's causing your breathlessness, recommend ways to manage it, and prescribe medicines. They can also refer you to other professionals.

Physiotherapists

Physiotherapists can teach you breathing techniques. They can also help you to plan your daily activities in a way that doesn't make you get so breathless. If you want to do more activity, physiotherapists can show you ways to exercise safely. They can also help you manage fatigue if you have it.

Occupational therapists

Occupational therapists (OTs) can help you to plan your activities so that you can do the things that are most important to you. They can recommend different techniques, equipment or changes to your home like hand-rails, that would make it easier to carry out activities.

Hospices

If you're living at home, you can have treatment and support in a hospice. At many hospices, you can come into the day therapy unit. This is a part of the hospice for people who aren't staying there. Health professionals run sessions to help you manage your symptoms. Some hospices run group sessions where you can learn about how to manage fatigue, anxiety and breathlessness. Ask your doctor if there any sessions you can attend at your local hospice. Hospices also have wards where you can stay for a longer period and get extra support to manage your symptoms. Read more about Marie Curie hospices on page 31.

Clinical nurse specialists

Clinical nurse specialists are experts in particular illnesses such as COPD or lung cancer. They can give advice on how to manage breathlessness and which medicines are best for you. They can also give you information about support groups and classes in your local area.

Palliative care nurses

Palliative care nurses are part of a hospice or hospital team. They are specialists in managing symptoms and supporting people with a terminal illness. Palliative care nurses work in hospices and hospitals and can also visit you at home.

Social workers

Social workers can help you to find out if you can get any benefits or local support, such as carers to come and help you at home. They can also arrange respite care for any friends and family members who are looking after you.

Other professionals

You might find it helpful to talk to other professionals such as counsellors, psychologists, music and arts therapists, and spiritual advisors. They are trained to talk to you about what's most important to you and support you with any worries, fears and concerns. They can sometimes be accessed through a hospice. Or you can ask your doctor about what services are available in your area.

Breathlessness towards the end of life

Breathlessness can affect people at any stage of their illness. Sometimes someone's breathlessness can get worse as their illness progresses and they approach the end of their life. People can still use all the techniques that have helped them before, such as controlled breathing and using a fan, if it's comfortable to do so. Sometimes the breathlessness may improve for a while as the person is less able to do activities and has to rest more.

There are medicines that can keep someone comfortable even as they become more breathless. A doctor or nurse can help with medicines if breathlessness becomes more difficult to manage.

Some people experience other changes in breathing towards the end of life, including noisy breathing, shallow breathing or irregular breathing. This isn't usually distressing for the person themselves, but there may be things a doctor or nurse can do to help. For more information visit mariecurie.org.uk/what-to-expect or contact our Support Line on **0800 090 2309***.

Supporting someone with breathlessness

If your friend or family member has breathlessness, there are lots of things you can do to support them:

- Understand that your relationship to the person might change as they may need you to help them with more activities.
- Talk to them about what activities are most important for them to do.
- Support them to do those activities at their own pace.
- Be prepared that you might need to take on more tasks such as cooking and cleaning. If you need extra help with this, speak to your doctor or social worker (see page 26).
- Support them to do breathing exercises and relaxation techniques. You could read out the instructions for them (see page 12).
- Ask the person if they would like you to join them at appointments or group sessions where you can learn about breathing control too. This might make it easier for you to help them with the techniques.
- Keep rooms well ventilated by opening windows or using a fan.
- Encourage the person to talk about any fears or worries they have.

Supporting someone with breathlessness due to a terminal illness can be rewarding but it can also be very challenging. If you need extra support, speak to your GP about how you're feeling. They can support you with your own health, refer you to a social worker (see page 27) or recommend support groups in your local area.



Brian Morrison/Marie Curie

How Marie Curie can help

We help everyone affected by a terminal illness get the care and support they need, whether you have an illness yourself or you're a family member or friend.

Marie Curie Support Line

0800 090 2309*

Ask questions and find support. Speak to a trained member of staff or a nurse for free confidential information on all aspects of terminal illness.

Open 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday and 11am to 5pm Saturday. Your call may be recorded for training and monitoring purposes.

Marie Curie Online Chat

You can talk to our trained staff and get information and support via our online chat service. **mariecurie.org.uk/support**

Marie Curie Community

Share experiences and find support by talking to people in a similar situation. **community.mariecurie.org.uk**

Marie Curie Information

We have a range of free information available to view online or as printed booklets. **mariecurie.org.uk/support**

Marie Curie Hospices

Our hospices offer the reassurance of specialist care and support, in a friendly, welcoming environment, for people living with a terminal illness and their loved ones – whether you're staying in the hospice, or just coming in for the day. Our hospices also support people who have been bereaved, and some offer support for children.

mariecurie.org.uk/hospices

Marie Curie Nursing Services

Marie Curie Nurses and Healthcare Assistants work in people's homes across the UK, providing hands-on care and vital emotional support. If you're living with a terminal illness, they can help you stay surrounded by the people you care about most, in the place where you're most comfortable.

mariecurie.org.uk/nurses

Marie Curie Helper Volunteers

We know the little things can make a big difference when you're living with a terminal illness. That's where our trained Helper Volunteers come in. They can visit you regularly to have a chat over a cup of tea, help you get to an appointment or just listen when you need a friendly ear.

mariecurie.org.uk/helper

Useful organisations

Macmillan Cancer Support

0808 808 00 00

macmillan.org.uk

Information and support for people living with cancer in the UK.

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

01455 883300

bacp.co.uk

Find detailed information about different types of therapy and counselling. You can also search for a therapist near you.

About this information

This booklet was produced by Marie Curie's Information and Support team. It has been reviewed by health and social care professionals and people affected by terminal illness.

If you'd like to provide feedback about this booklet or would like to see the list of sources used to create this information, please email review@mariecurie.org.uk or call the Marie Curie Support Line on **0800 090 2309***.

Notice

The information in this publication is provided for the benefit and personal use of people with a terminal illness, their families and carers.

This information is provided as general guidance for information purposes only. It should not be considered as medical or clinical advice, or used as a substitute for personalised or specific advice from a qualified medical practitioner. In respect of legal, financial or other matters covered by this information, you should also consider seeking specific professional advice about your personal circumstances.

While we try to ensure that this information is accurate, we do not accept any liability arising from its use. Please refer to our website for our full terms and conditions.

*Calls to the Marie Curie Support Line are free from landlines and mobiles. Your call may be recorded for quality and training purposes.

Breathlessness diary and action plan

Keeping a diary of your breathlessness can help you to know if you feel more breathless at certain times of the day, or after doing certain activities. This can help you to plan your activities so that you don't feel so breathless.

Breathlessness diary

Every day, write down any activities you do throughout the day and how breathless you feel. Include resting as an activity. You can rate how breathless you're feeling on a scale of 0-10. 10 is the most breathless you can imagine and 0 is not breathless at all. You might find it useful to share this with your doctor or nurse. It can also be helpful to show it to your family and friends, so they can see how breathlessness affects you.

| <u>Date</u> _____ | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat | Sun |
|-------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Early morning | | | | | | | |
| Late morning | | | | | | | |
| Early afternoon | | | | | | | |
| Late afternoon | | | | | | | |
| Early evening | | | | | | | |
| Late evening | | | | | | | |
| Overnight | | | | | | | |

Write down the activities you do throughout the day. Include resting as an activity.

| Date | Activities |
|-----------|------------------------------|
| Monday | <i>Example: Had a shower</i> |
| Tuesday | |
| Wednesday | |
| Thursday | |
| Friday | |
| Saturday | |
| Sunday | |

Weekly planner

Write down the things you need to do this week:

Write down the things you want to do this week. Include activities you find enjoyable and relaxing:

Ask yourself four things about any activity you are going to do:

- Do I want to do it?
- Do I need to do it?
- Is there an easier way to do it?
- Am I happy for someone else to do it for me?

Look at your breathlessness diary to see when you might be likely to feel breathless. Try and plan your activities so that they're spaced out throughout the week. It might be helpful to plan a rest after any activities that make you feel very breathless or tired.

| | Morning | Afternoon | Evening |
|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|
| Monday Date | <i>Example: Rest</i> | <i>pick up K from school</i> | <i>Watch a film</i> |
| Tuesday Date | | | |
| Wednesday Date | | | |
| Thursday Date | | | |
| Friday Date | | | |
| Saturday Date | | | |
| Sunday Date | | | |

You might find it helpful to share your weekly planner with your friends and family, so they can support you with your activities.

Breathlessness action plan

Write down techniques and medicines that you've tried when you feel breathless – for example, using a fan. Which ones worked well, and which ones didn't?

Think about the techniques and medicines that work well for you. Write down what you will do next time you feel breathless.

This is your breathlessness action plan. You may find it helpful to discuss this with your doctor, nurse or physiotherapist.

Marie Curie – who we're here for

We're here for people living with any terminal illness, and their families. We offer expert care, guidance and support to help them get the most from the time they have left.

Marie Curie Support Line

0800 090 2309*

Ask questions and find support from trained staff and nurses.

Open 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday,

11am to 5pm Saturday.

mariecurie.org.uk/support

You can also visit **community.mariecurie.org.uk** to share experiences and find support by talking to people in a similar situation.

*Calls are free from landlines and mobiles.

Your call may be recorded for training and monitoring purposes.



**Care and support
through terminal illness**