

Breathlessness quick reference

Tips for
managing
breathlessness
at home

 **Asthma +
Respiratory**
FOUNDATION NZ

Conserve your energy and pace yourself

Plan your day: Will I have time for a break?

Prioritise tasks: What's most important?

Adapt tasks: Can it be done easier?

Delegate: Can someone else help?

Use a fan

Use either a hand-held fan, freestanding fan, a desktop fan, or the breeze through an open door or window. Hold the fan about 15 centimetres from your face so you can feel the air on your top lip.



Change your position



- Lean forward with arms resting on your knees or the sides of a chair and position knees slightly apart.



- Lean forward over a table or surface resting on your arms up on some pillows or similar.



- Lean forward with arms resting on a surface eg supermarket trolley, or back of a chair. Alternately rest standing with your back against a wall.

Breathing techniques

Breathing control/tummy control:

Place hands on tummy, breathe in (tummy goes out), breathe out (tummy goes in).

Pursed-lip breathing: Breathe in through your nose, breathe out like through a straw.

Blow as you go: Breathe in before exerting effort, breathe out while making the effort.

Paced breathing: Breathe in for a few counts, breathe out for a few counts.

Breathe around the rectangle: breathe in on the short side, breathe out on the long side.

Distraction and meditation

Focus on things that bring you pleasure or calmness, such as mindfulness or meditation.

Exercise

Regular activity should be done in moderation. Ask to be referred to your local pulmonary rehabilitation program.

Take your medication

Use your prescribed medication as directed. If you have difficulty managing your breathlessness, talk to your healthcare professional as there may be other medications that may help.



When feeling breathless...



Stop what
you're doing



Rest your position



Use your fan



Start your breathing
technique