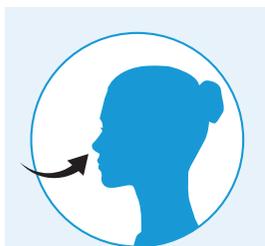
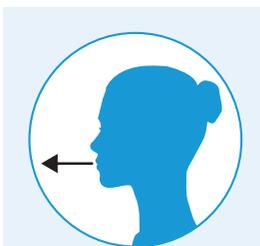


Pursed Lip Breathing



Breathe in
through your nose.



Breathe out
through pursed lips.

You may find this helpful if you are very breathless, become anxious or if you find tummy breathing difficult.

This type of breathing allows more time for the air to leave your lungs, making it easier to take the next breath in.

Find a comfortable position. You could choose one of the positions of ease as shown previously. Relax your shoulders. Breathe in through your nose then breathe out in a relaxed fashion through pursed lips. Continue until you feel your breathing is under control.

General Advice

- Avoid breath holding during activities e.g. stair climbing, housekeeping etc.
- Avoid rushing. Try to pace activities. This might mean allowing more time to do activities e.g. getting out of bed, showering, dressing etc.
- Try to 'blow as you go'. This means breathing out on effort e.g. blow out when lifting or when standing up from a chair.



Irish Society of
Chartered
Physiotherapists
The Voice of Physiotherapy in Ireland

Physiotherapy advice
for breathlessness in
patients with COVID-19

**If you feel as though your
symptoms are worsening or that
you need further treatment,
please contact your GP.**

The Irish Society of Chartered Physiotherapists acknowledges and thanks its Interest Group in Respiratory Care (CPRC) for developing this leaflet and also thanks its Interest Group in Neurology and Gerontology (CPNG) for endorsing the leaflet.

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How to manage your breathlessness?

Why do I feel breathless?

Breathlessness is a common symptom of COVID-19. Some people describe it as feeling 'puffed', 'short of breath' or 'winded'.

In the early stages of COVID-19 you may experience breathlessness when doing what you would consider to be minimal activity e.g. getting dressed, walking or showering. During this time it is important to slow down and pace yourself. The feeling of shortness of breath may continue for a period of time after your illness. You may have lost strength and fitness as you won't have been as active. This should improve as you recover from your illness and get fitter.

Feeling breathless can make you feel panicked or anxious. This can make your breathlessness worse. The exercises in this leaflet are designed to help you control and monitor your breathing.

What positions can I use to help my breathing?

The following positions support the muscles of the body that help with breathing and can help to ease shortness of breath. Choose a position from the ones below which suits what you are doing. It is important to try and relax in these positions. A good way of doing this is by focusing on relaxing the muscles in your neck and shoulders.



Sitting leaning forward

Sit leaning forward resting your elbows on your knees or the arms of the chair.



Sitting leaning forward at a table

Sit leaning forward with your elbows resting on a table. You may wish to put some pillows or cushions on the table for comfort.



Standing leaning forward

Lean forwards resting your elbows onto a chair, a wall or a railing. You could use a walking stick or a frame if you use one for walking.

Before practising, make sure you are in a comfortable position, with your head and back supported and shoulders and upper chest relaxed. Place one hand on your tummy. Feel the tummy rise and expand as you breathe in and relax down as you breathe out. Breathe gently when practising; there should only be a slight movement of your tummy at rest.

'Breathe low and slow, relax, let go'

If you have a tendency to breathe with small, fast breaths from the top of our chest, you may find taking slower, deeper breaths from your tummy helps to ease breathlessness.

'Breathe a rectangle'

When practising relaxed tummy breathing some people like to picture a rectangle, like shown below. Wherever you are, there is often a rectangle to be seen, whether this is a book, a TV, computer or tablet screen, door, window, table top, or even a picture on the wall.

Breathing Control

Relaxed Tummy Breathing

This breathing technique can help if you are breathless after doing activity. It may also help you feel more relaxed if you are feeling anxious or panicky.

Breathing from the tummy often does not come naturally. You should therefore practice relaxed tummy breathing when you are not breathless. This will help you master the technique.

