

Controlling your breathing

Advice for staff to share with patients

Having a condition that caused shortness of breath or breathing difficulties is naturally stressful and sometimes frightening.

When we are stressed we tend to find our breathing changes which can contribute to further feelings of breathlessness. Getting breathlessness is normal: what matters is how you deal with it.

To control this we encourage patients to change to an 'extended exhale breathing' pattern:

Instructions

- Sit in a chair with your shoulders relaxed against the back of the chair (or upright in bed if unable to get to a chair)
- **Breathe out slowly and gently, through your mouth** for as long as comfortable.
- **Breathe in slowly through your nose (for a shorter period of time)**, letting the air in deeply, towards your lower belly.
- Continue for about 2-3 minutes, repeat as often as required.

You can change the counts of the in and out breaths to suit you – just makes sure **the out breath is longer than the in breath!**

Think of a bath – we always empty the bath before we fill the water up again. This is the same as the lungs. Empty the lungs and you get a better breath in.

