



Tips for Managing Shortness of Breath

Things you can do on your own



Get comfortable:

- Sit upright or in a reclined position with your feet on a footrest - don't slouch
- Lie down with your head propped up on several pillows, or lie down in a reclining chair – never flat
- Try pursed-lipped breathing:
 - Breathe in through your nose for two counts
 - Breathe out through your pursed (whistle shaped) lips for four counts
- Rest as much as you need

Get fresh air:

- Avoid dust, fragrances, smoke, and pollution
- Avoid extreme temperatures
- Try sitting near a room fan

See the Other Resources page for more information

With the help of your care team



Your care team might suggest a prescription medication or treatment to help you breathe better, such as:

- Oxygen
- Inhalers
- Nebulizers
- Medications that can help with severe shortness of breath, like morphine or lorazepam (Ativan)
- Treatment for anemia
- Diuretics (like Lasix)



When to call your care team for help



Your care team takes shortness of breath very seriously - **always** call your care team if you have:

- New shortness of breath
- Shortness of breath that is worsening
- Blue or pale looking skin, mouth, or nails
- A pre-existing deep venous thrombosis (DVT) or blood clot/clotting disorder
- Symptoms of leg or arm swelling (with or without pain) in addition to shortness of breath
 - Leg or arm swelling can be a sign of a blood clot, which has a very serious side effect of causing shortness of breath (pulmonary embolism). Risk of blood clots increase after surgery, especially with long periods of being in bed. You may need a test to determine if there is a blood clot.
- Chest pains
- A new irregular heartbeat
- A new fast heartbeat
- Anxiety accompanying shortness of breath

Additional information on Shortness of Breath



- [Click here](#) to for tips on getting started with meditation
- [Click here](#) for tips for managing shortness of breath
- [Click here](#) for more information on shortness of breath
- [Click here](#) to see videos on managing shortness of breath
- [Click here](#) for tips on living with dyspnea
- [Click here](#) for resources on managing breathlessness