

Pursed Lip Breathing

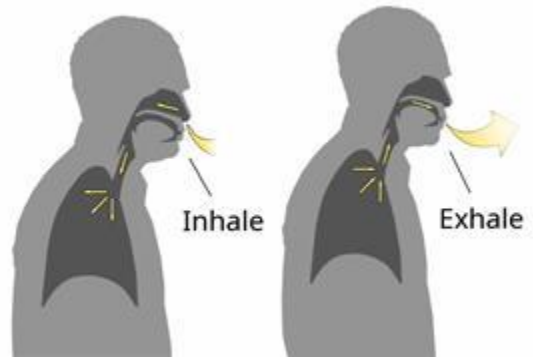
Pursed lip breathing is a technique to relieve the feeling of being short of breath. Some long-term respiratory conditions, such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and severe asthma, can make it hard to breathe out (*exhale*) all the air in your lungs. This can cause air that has less oxygen than normal to build up in your lungs (*air trapping*). Trapped air means your lungs fill with less fresh air when you breathe in, or inhale. As a result, you feel short of breath.

Pursed lip breathing keeps your airways open longer when you exhale and empties more air from your lungs. This makes more space for fresh air when you inhale. Pursed lip breathing can also slow down your breathing and keep your body from having to work so hard to breathe. Over time, pursed lip breathing may help you be able to be more physically active and do more activities. You should use this breathing technique during the most difficult part of any activity, such as when bending over or climbing stairs.

How to perform pursed lip breathing

Being short of breath can make you tense and anxious. Before you start this breathing exercise, take a minute to relax your shoulders and close your eyes. Then:

1. Start the exercise by closing your mouth.
2. Breathe in through your nose, taking a normal breath. You can do this at your normal rate of breathing. If you feel you are not getting enough air, breathe in while slowly counting to 2 or 3.
3. Pucker (*purse*) your lips as if you were going to whistle.
4. Gently tighten the muscles of your abdomen or press on your abdomen to help push the air out.
5. Breathe out slowly through your pursed lips. Take at least twice as long to breathe out as it takes you to breathe in.
6. Make sure that you breathe out all of the air, but do not force air out.
7. Ask your health care provider how often and how long to do this exercise.



Follow these instructions at home:

- Take over-the-counter and prescription medicines only as told by your health care provider.
- **Do not** use any products that contain nicotine or tobacco. These products include cigarettes, chewing tobacco, and vaping devices, such as e-cigarettes. If you need help quitting, ask your health care provider.
- Return to your normal activities as told by your health care provider. Ask your health care provider what activities are safe for you.
- Keep all follow-up visits. This is important.

Where to find more information

- American Lung Association: lung.org

Contact a health care provider if:

- Your shortness of breath gets worse.
- You become less able to exercise or be physically active.
- You develop a cough.
- You develop a fever.
- You experience problems with this breathing technique.

Get help right away if:

- You are struggling to breathe.
- Your shortness of breath prevents you from doing any activity.

These symptoms may represent a serious problem that is an emergency. Do not wait to see if the symptoms will go away. Get medical help right away. Call your local emergency services (911 in the U.S.). Do not drive yourself to the hospital.

Summary

- Pursed lip breathing is a breathing technique that helps to remove trapped air from your lungs. This technique helps you get more oxygen into your lungs.
- Pursed lip breathing can help slow down your breathing and keeps your body from having to work so hard to breathe.
- When performing this technique, take at least twice as long to breathe out as it takes you to breathe in.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.

Diaphragmatic Breathing

Diaphragmatic breathing is a breathing exercise that uses the dome-shaped muscle (*diaphragm*) separating your chest from your abdomen. Using this muscle to breathe is the best way to breathe deeply. When doing diaphragmatic breathing, it is important to feel the movement of your abdomen. It should expand when you breathe in (*inhale*) and go down when you breathe out (*exhale*). This type of breathing is also called belly breathing.

You may be asked to learn diaphragmatic breathing if:

- You have a lung disease like chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).
- You have shortness of breath at rest or with activity.
- You have anxiety or trouble relaxing.
- You have respiratory complications after surgery.

How to perform diaphragmatic breathing

You should practice this breathing exercise several times a day until you are comfortable doing it at rest. Then use diaphragmatic breathing while doing activity to decrease your shortness of breath.

1. Before you begin, take a minute to close your eyes and relax your shoulders, chest, and neck.
2. You can do this breathing exercise lying on your back or sitting in a chair.
3. Place both hands on your abdomen just under your rib cage.
4. Breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose. Focus on your diaphragm or abdomen to breathe. The hand on your abdomen should rise.
5. Breathe out slowly through pursed (*puckered*) lips as if you are blowing out a candle. The hand on your abdomen should lower.
6. Repeat steps 4 and 5 as told by your health care provider.
7. Ask your health care provider how many breaths to take and how often to do the breathing exercise.

Follow these instructions at home:

- Take over-the-counter and prescription medicines only as told by your health care provider.
- **Do not** use any products that contain nicotine or tobacco. These products include cigarettes, chewing tobacco, and vaping devices, such as e-cigarettes. If you need help quitting, ask your health care provider.
- Return to your normal activities as told by your health care provider. Ask your health care provider what activities are safe for you.
- Keep all follow-up visits. This is important.



Where to find more information

- American Lung Association: lung.org
- COPD Foundation: copdfoundation.org

Contact a health care provider if:

- Your shortness of breath gets worse.
- You become less able to exercise or be physically active.
- You develop a cough.
- You develop a fever.
- You experience problems with this breathing technique.

Get help right away if:

- You are struggling to breathe.
- Your shortness of breath prevents you from doing any activity.

These symptoms may represent a serious problem that is an emergency. Do not wait to see if the symptoms will go away. Get medical help right away. Call your local emergency services (911 in the U.S.). Do not drive yourself to the hospital.

Summary

- Diaphragmatic breathing is a breathing exercise that uses the dome-shaped muscle (*diaphragm*) separating your chest from your abdomen.
- Using this muscle to breathe is the best way to breathe deeply.
- You can do diaphragmatic breathing lying on your back or sitting in a chair.
- When doing this breathing exercise, it is important to feel the movement of your abdomen. It should expand when you breathe in and go down when you breathe out.
- Follow your health care provider's instructions about how often to do diaphragmatic breathing and how many breaths to take.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.

Shortness of Breath, Adult

Shortness of breath is when a person has trouble breathing or when a person feels like she or he is having trouble breathing in enough air. Shortness of breath could be a sign of a medical problem.

Follow these instructions at home:

Pollutants

- **Do not** use any products that contain nicotine or tobacco. These products include cigarettes, chewing tobacco, and vaping devices, such as e-cigarettes. This also includes cigars and pipes. If you need help quitting, ask your health care provider.
- Avoid things that can irritate your airways, including:
 - Smoke. This includes campfire smoke, forest fire smoke, and secondhand smoke from tobacco products. **Do not** smoke or allow others to smoke in your home.
 - Mold.
 - Dust.
 - Air pollution.
 - Chemical fumes.
 - Things that can give you an allergic reaction (*allergens*) if you have allergies. Common allergens include pollen from grasses or trees and animal dander.
- Keep your living space clean and free of mold and dust.



General instructions

- Pay attention to any changes in your symptoms.
- Take over-the-counter and prescription medicines only as told by your health care provider. This includes oxygen therapy and inhaled medicines.
- Rest as needed.
- Return to your normal activities as told by your health care provider. Ask your health care provider what activities are safe for you.
- Keep all follow-up visits. This is important.

Contact a health care provider if:

- Your condition does not improve as soon as expected.
- You have a hard time doing your normal activities, even after you rest.
- You have new symptoms.
- You cannot walk up stairs or exercise the way that you normally do.

Get help right away if:

- Your shortness of breath gets worse.
- You have shortness of breath when you are resting.
- You feel light-headed or you faint.
- You have a cough that is not controlled with medicines.

- You cough up blood.
- You have pain with breathing.
- You have pain in your chest, arms, shoulders, or abdomen.
- You have a fever.

These symptoms may be an emergency. Get help right away. Call 911.

- **Do not wait to see if the symptoms will go away.**
- **Do not drive yourself to the hospital.**

Summary

- Shortness of breath is when a person has trouble breathing enough air. It can be a sign of a medical problem.
- Avoid things that irritate your lungs, such as smoking, pollution, mold, and dust.
- Pay attention to changes in your symptoms and contact your health care provider if you have a hard time completing daily activities because of shortness of breath.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.