



BREATHING EXERCISES FOR LUNG FIBROSIS

Fibrosis causes scarring of the lungs (pulmonary system), makes them stiffer and less elastic. It can become harder to breathe in deeply as the lungs are less able to expand properly. This leads to less oxygen in the blood and can make you feel breathless.¹

It can be frustrating when routine daily tasks that were once manageable start to become more challenging. If you feel anxious, your breathlessness can become worse and you may begin to hyperventilate (when you start breathing very fast without control and get too much oxygen and a deficiency in carbon dioxide).




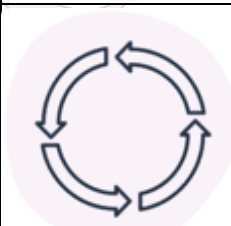
Breathing exercises can control your breathing and help you to strengthen your lungs.² If you start to feel breathless, try your best to stay calm and breathe slowly.

Below are 5 simple breathing exercises that can help prevent breathlessness and settle your breathing.

PURSED-LIPS BREATHING

Pursed-lips breathing can help you to control your breathlessness and return your breathing to normal if you are beginning to hyperventilate. It may also help reduce any fear and anxiety you may be experiencing.

How do I do it?

	1. Breathe in through your nose (As if you are smelling something) for about 2 seconds		2. Pucker your lips - Like you're getting ready to blow out candles on a birthday cake.
	3. Breathe out very slowly - Through pursed lips for about 4 seconds		4. Repeat

BLOW-AS-YOU-GO⁴

Blow-as-you-go is useful for helping you carry out daily activities that make you feel breathless.

How do I do it?

Breathe in before you start the activity, and then exhale as you perform the activity.

EG: when lifting heavy items, breathe in before you lift the item and then breathe out as you lift.





This method can be used as you perform any activity no matter how big or small. You may also try combining **blow-as-you-go** with the pursed-lips breathing exercise.



BELLY BREATHING, AKA DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING²

Belly breathing is an exercise that engages your diaphragm (the flat muscle at the bottom of the rib cage that controls your breathing). Belly breathing is best done when you're feeling rested and relaxed, while sitting back or lying down, in a position that allows your chest and shoulders to relax.

How do I do it?

<p>1. Place one hand on your chest and the other on your belly</p>  <p>When you begin to breathe, you should feel the hand on your belly move, but the hand on your chest should remain as still as possible</p>	<p>2. Breathe in slowly through your nose</p>  <p>Your belly should move out toward your hand</p>
<p>3. As you breathe out slowly through pursed lips</p>  <p>Gently press on your belly, this will push up on your diaphragm to help get air out of your lungs</p>	<p>4. Repeat</p>  <p>Steps 1 to 3 until you're feeling relaxed</p>

PACED BREATHING⁴

Pacing your breathing can be useful while you are active, for instance, while you are walking, climbing stairs or when performing any activity that makes you breathless.

Paced breathing means matching your breath with your physical steps. Try matching your steps to your rate of breathing. You can combine this method with the pursed-lips breathing exercise if it helps.

How do I do it?

1. Count to yourself as you walk
2. Try breathing in as you slowly count to 1 whilst taking a single step
3. Then take another one or two steps as you breathe out over 2 or 3 seconds
4. Adjust the number of steps you take while you breathe in and out to a pace that feels comfortable for you

Paced breathing is also useful when climbing stairs. Try to slowly breathe in and out over the course of 1-3 seconds as you gradually make your way up one step at a time. If you are feeling comfortable, you can try to increase the number of steps you take in a single breath.



RELAXED SLOW AND DEEP BREATHING⁴

Deep breathing isn't just for Pilates, yoga or meditation - it can be very useful while you're active too. Use it as soon as you begin an activity, whether that be during small activities around the home or when you go out walking.

How do I do it?

Whilst keeping active, try to slow your breathing and inhale through your nose as deeply as possible.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Breathing exercises can help you cope with breathlessness.**
- **Pursed-lip and belly breathing are simple and effective exercises to try**
- **Doing breathing exercises can help reduce anxiety as well as making everyday activities easier.**

Take your time doing and learning these breathing exercises. Don't try to take on too much at once.

While these exercises are useful, they are not to be used alone for managing your health while living with pulmonary fibrosis.

Make sure that you have spoken to your treatment team and agreed on a full plan of care with them. The plan should include all the appropriate medications, pulmonary rehabilitation exercises, emotional support and lifestyle changes.

References:

MAIN SOURCE: <https://patient.boehringer-ingelheim.com/lwpl/living-with-pulmonary-fibrosis/managing-your-pulmonary-fibrosis/breathing-exercises>

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