

Many health conditions cause breathlessness, such as heart or lung diseases. Self-isolating with a pre-existing condition, whether or not you have a COVID-19 infection, may contribute to worsening anxiety and muscle weakness leading to increased breathlessness. Below are some tips that may help you manage your breathlessness. Try some of these tips to see which ones may work best for you.

**It is OK to ask for help. Contact your health care team as needed for support.**

### Positions to help ease breathlessness:

Relaxed sitting	Forward leaning (sitting or standing)	Side Lying
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sit on a comfortable chair</li> <li>• Support both arms</li> <li>• Relax shoulders, hands and wrist</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sit on a chair or lean against a banister/wall</li> <li>• Relax your hands, wrists and neck</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lie down on side</li> <li>• Support your head, chest, top arm and leg with pillows</li> </ul> 

### Breathing Techniques:

Abdominal Breathing	Recovery Breathing (for extreme breathlessness)	Relaxation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relax your shoulders</li> <li>• Rest a hand on your abdomen, just below your chest</li> <li>• Allow your hand to rise as you slowly inhale</li> <li>• Breathe out slowly with pursed lips</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a forward leaning position</li> <li>• Drop your chin</li> <li>• Breathe in and out with pursed lips</li> <li>• Focus on your exhale, increasing the length with each breath</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relaxing can help slow your breathing</li> <li>• Find a comfortable position</li> <li>• Close your eyes. Check for any tense muscles (face, shoulders, chest) and relax each of them</li> <li>• Try to visualize a relaxing scene or listen to music</li> </ul>

### More tips for managing breathlessness at home:

Environment	Walking	Day to Day Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain a calm environment</li> <li>• Avoid irritants (i.e. smoking, perfume, flowers, pets)</li> <li>• <b>Do NOT use fans, nebulizers or open windows if it is confirmed or suspected that you have a COVID-19 infection</b></li> <li>• Try using a cool, wet flannel on your nose and cheeks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Move at a comfortable pace</li> <li>• Breathe steadily and avoid holding your breath or talking</li> <li>• Pace your breathing to your steps - breathe in over one step, breathe out over the next two steps</li> <li>• Use walking aids or a wheelchair if needed</li> <li>• Use the handrail when climbing stairs and take steps slowly</li> <li>• Stay as active as you can, to prevent your muscles becoming weaker</li> <li>• Stop and rest as needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep things you use often close by</li> <li>• Take medications as prescribed</li> <li>• Plan ahead for chores and daily activities</li> <li>• Spread your activity throughout the day and avoid rushing</li> <li>• Rest between activities and when your breathing begins to feel uncomfortable</li> <li>• Avoid hot water when showering or bathing</li> <li>• Have a charged phone beside you in case you need to call for help</li> </ul>
When feeling anxious	When eating and drinking	Keep in touch
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remember that this is a worrying time with a lot of uncertainty, so it's natural to feel worried</li> <li>• Try the breathing exercises and positions suggested on this handout</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eat small meals often, rather than one large one</li> <li>• Take smaller bites</li> <li>• Avoid foods that are difficult to chew, add sauces when possible</li> <li>• Drink sips of fluid often to avoid becoming dehydrated (adhere to fluid restrictions if prescribed by your care provider)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stay in touch and share your feelings with friends and relatives by using the phone, letters, email and other technology (i.e. video chat)</li> <li>• <b>Contact your health care team as needed for support</b></li> </ul>

#### References:

BC Centre for Palliative Care (2017). B.C. Inter-professional Palliative Symptom Management Guidelines.

Higginson IJ, Maddocks M, Bayly J, Brighton LJ, Hutchinson A, Booth S, Ogden M, Farquhar M. on behalf of the NIHR Applied Research Collaborative Palliative and End of Life Care Theme. April 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020. Managing your breathlessness at home during the corona virus (COVID-19) outbreak.