

How to Cope With Being Short Of Breath - Positions

People with lung problems often feel short of breath. Many daily tasks can make you breathless, such as walking, getting dressed or doing jobs around the house. Being breathless can make you panic or feel frightened.

When you learn how to control your breathing these feelings will not trouble you as much and you will be able to do more. When you are breathless, **do not panic**. Your breathing will settle.

The positions in this leaflet will help you control your breathing. Remember to take rests and use one of these positions before you get too short of breath. You will also find the breathing exercises in leaflet GL-02 helpful.

What positions can I use when I am short of breath?

Choose a position from the suggestions below which suits what you are doing and where you are. When you are in any of these positions it is important to relax. Some of these positions will work better than others depending on your condition. Your physiotherapist will help you with this.



Sitting leaning forward

Sit leaning forward with your elbows resting on your knees. Make your wrists and hands go limp.

Sitting leaning forward at a table

Sit leaning forward with your elbows resting on a table. You can also put a few pillows or cushions on the table to rest your head on.



Sitting Upright

Sit upright against the back of a firm chair. Rest your arms on the chair arms or on your thighs. Make your wrists and hands go limp.

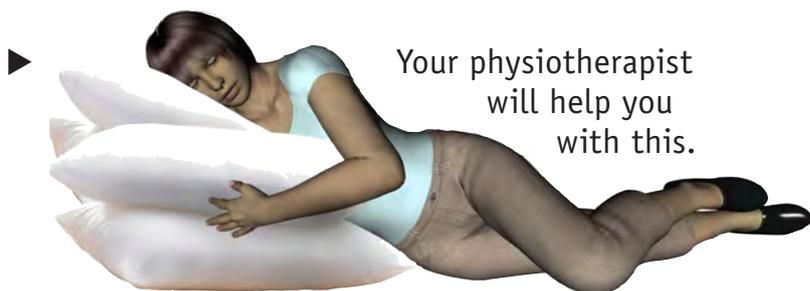


High side lying

Lie on your side, with a few pillows under your head and shoulders. Some people like to use a foam wedge instead. A pillow between your waist and armpit can stop you sliding down the bed. Make sure the top pillow supports your head and neck.

Your knees and hips should be slightly bent. Depending on your lung condition it may be better to bend both of your legs (*below*), or just your top leg (*overleaf*). ▶

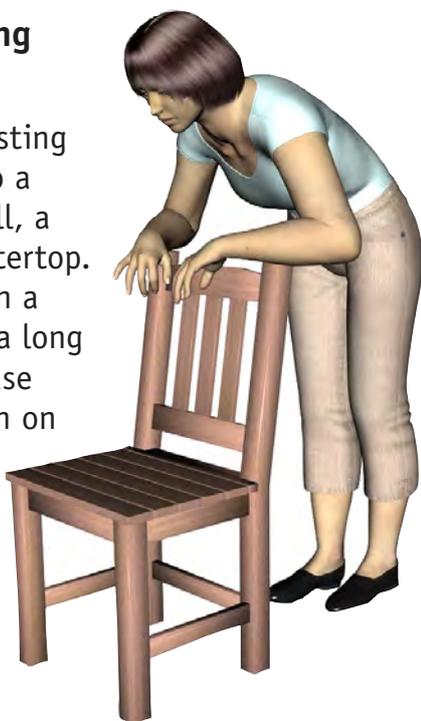




When standing or out and about

Standing leaning forward

Lean forwards resting your elbows onto a wall, a windowsill, a railing or a countertop. You could lean on a walking stick or a long umbrella if you use one. You can lean on a trolley while you are out shopping. A walking frame with wheels can be helpful.



Standing leaning back or sideways

Lean back or sideways against a wall, with your feet slightly apart and about one foot (30cms) away from the wall. Let your hands hang loosely by your sides, or rest them in your pockets. You may prefer to rest your hands or thumbs on your belt loops or waistband, or across the shoulder strap of your handbag.



Remember to take rests sooner rather than later

Useful contacts

Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Respiratory Care
www.acprc.org.uk

British Thoracic Society
www.brit-thoracic.org.uk

British Lung Foundation
www.lunguk.org

Chartered Society of Physiotherapy
www.csp.org.uk

Asthma UK
www.asthma.org.uk

