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Breathing control
is useful during
exertion.

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*Please do not hesitate to consult your
health care professional to talk about the
options available to you and your family*

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Managing Shortness of Breath



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Te Kahu Pairuri ki Taranaki

Do you notice that if you are having trouble breathing, you become anxious?

This can make you panic, which can make you even more short of breath!

When people experience this, it can be so distressing that they start to limit their activities to avoid anything that may cause them to feel shortness of breath or “panicky”.

Here are some ideas to help you manage this

Non Medical Aids

- Music / TV / distraction
- Fan blowing across breathing space—can be small hand held fan—in front of face
- Good ventilation—open a window or door
- Several pillows for sleeping or when lying down

Medication

- Intra-nasal Midazolam spray—can help with anxiety and shortness of breath
- Morphine Elixir prior to activities such as showering, a short walk or having a meal, helps makes breathing easier

Your Hospice team can talk to you about these medications.

Breathing Techniques

Diaphragmatic Breathing

Sit or lie relaxed with your hand on your tummy

Let your shoulders drop

Breathe in and feel your tummy rise

Your chest and shoulders shouldn't move

Try to slow your rate of breathing

Pursed Lip Breathing

Helps to open your airways when breathing out

To practice:

Breathe in normally

Breathe out through pursed lips

Pacing

Breathing control is useful during exertion. For example climbing stairs

The tendency is to hold your breath but this only increases breathlessness

Breathe rhythmically and in time with the steps taken. For example: breathe in for one step, out for two steps

Find which ever rhythm is comfortable

What Should I Do When I Am Breathless?

The following positions are helpful when you are short of breath—they help support your upper chest and shoulders. Practice your normal resting breathing in these positions.

High side lying:

Use four/five pillows

Lie on your side and slightly forward

Bend your knees a little



Supported standing:

Stand leaning backwards or sideways against a wall

Step your feet apart and away from the wall

Let your shoulders relax and arms hang loosely at your sides

Supported forward sitting:

Sitting at a table, lean forward resting your forearms on the table

You may like to lean over pillows



Supported forward leaning:

Lean forward with your forearms resting on a window ledge or bench

Forward sitting:

Sit leaning forward

Rest your forearms on your knees

Relax your chest and shoulders

