



The Oesophageal Patients Association

Caring for the cancer patient and their family

MANAGING BREATHLESSNESS

Common symptoms of breathlessness include distress and fear, laboured and fast breathing, frustration, depression, anger and ultimately fatigue.

Breathlessness may often occur after an operation. Below are some strategies that may be used to help ease your breathlessness

Preparation

It is important to take some time in preparation for your breathing exercises.

- Position

Position yourself in a comfortable chair in an upright position with your hands resting on your lap.

- Relaxation

Fully relax your shoulders and the muscles around the neck. Wear loose fitting clothes and ideally have a quiet environment in which to begin your breathing exercises. TAKE YOUR TIME!!

Breathing Re-education

- Abdominal breathing

Concentrate on your breathing and try to slow your breathing down. Place one hand on your abdomen which should move in and out. There should be a gentle flow between breathing in and out. If this is too difficult, try a short hold between breaths.

Make sure your shoulders are relaxed throughout.

Remember.....

You are in control of your breathing. Do not give up if changes do not appear immediately. It will take some practice and time to achieve the best results.

Anxiety Management

Anxiety may increase your breathlessness. Remember to try and relax as much as possible throughout your breathing exercises.

Drug Management

Try to ensure when and in what order drugs or inhalers should be taken, as many of them if taken correctly can help to ease your breathlessness.

Counselling and advice

Physiotherapists, ward nurses and Specialist Lung Nurses are available if you need any advice or reassurance.