



Living With a Lung Disease

What you need to know to simplify your life and stay active

A patient-partner collaboration

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Introduction

It may seem easier to avoid any kind of effort or exertion when you are constantly short of breath.

You may be tempted to avoid taking the stairs, getting dressed or even going out of the house. This booklet was created to help you!

We want these tools to help you stay independent in your day-to-day activities.

In this booklet, you will meet Diane, who lives with a severe lung disease and needs home oxygen. She receives visits from healthcare professionals at the SRSAD of the CIUSSS de l'Est-de-l'Île-de-Montréal (EMTL). The respiratory team at the Montreal Chest Institute (MUHC) also follows Diane on a regular basis.



Use this breathing technique to prevent shortness of breath

Controlling your breathing is essential to staying active.

Avoid holding your breath during physical exertion.

Inhale for 2 seconds when at rest and exhale for 4 seconds while performing an exercise.

It's important to take your time to fully breathe in and to lengthen the time you breathe out. This is the key to reducing shortness of breath!

When you exhale, purse your lips and let the air out of your lungs slowly and gently.

This technique will become easier with practice.



Positions to reduce shortness of breath

You must learn to control your shortness of breath, since it will become part of your life.

Changing your body position can help to reduce your shortness of breath and speed up your recovery time.

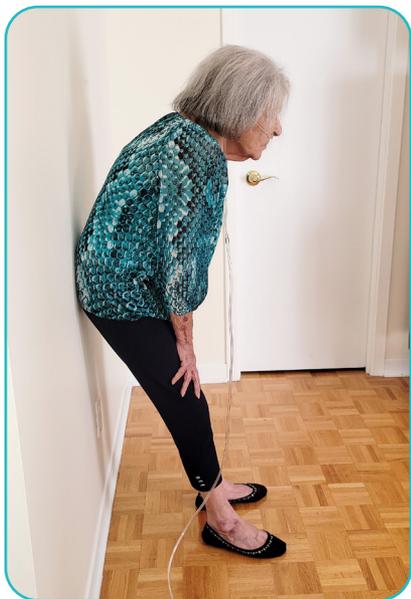
The following images show some of these different positions.

Bend your upper body forward and put your hands on your thighs, on a counter, or on a table, etc.

Applying your breathing technique in these positions is essential. Do not hesitate to refer back to the description of the technique in this booklet as needed.



Positions to reduce shortness of breath



Going up and down the stairs

Going up the stairs is physically demanding

Here is how to use the breathing technique to avoid shortness of breath.

Inhale for 2 seconds while resting and exhale for 4 seconds during the movement. As you go up or down the stairs, stop when you inhale and exhale when you are moving.

Use the railing if there is one. Make sure you have good footwear.

If you use oxygen, watch out for the oxygen tubing. We recommend holding it in one hand.

Be sure to take your time.



Using the stairs is an excellent exercise and will keep you active!

Going to bed

Sleep is essential to let your body recover and is part of your daily routine.

Getting in and out of bed can quickly become difficult, especially when you are exhausted from your day.

You may have to get up frequently at night to make trips to the bathroom, which can be challenging. The tips below will help you feel less out of breath and move safely at night.

Divide your bedtime routine into three steps :

- Prepare your things and your surroundings
- Prepare your bed
- Lie down

Prepare your things and your surroundings :

- Use a tray to keep all of your accessories near the bed:
 - Inhalers
 - Tissue paper
 - Flashlight
 - Bell or bicycle horn (to call for help)
- Leave a light on in the bathroom
- Avoid carpets near the bed (risk of falling)
- Avoid open-toed slippers without non-slip soles (risk of falling)
- Adjust the room temperature to avoid overheating
- Use a fan if needed

Prepare your bed :

- Elevate your upper body with several pillows, a wedge pillow or an electric bed with variable positions. This will make your breathing easier.
- Use lightweight blankets.



Lie down :

- Use the breathing technique when doing this movement.
- Sit on the edge of the bed and catch your breath.
- Turn your legs so that they are extended on the bed. Take a break while still sitting up
- Gradually lean your body backwards gradually until you find the most comfortable position for your breathing throughout the night.



Getting dressed

Dressing is a daily routine and is important to maintaining self-esteem.

All of the movements to perform this task can be considered exercise and will be beneficial as long as you use the breathing technique.

Here are some tips for getting dressed :

- Sit down.
- Choose clothes that are easy to put on :
 - Wear shirts or blouses. These require less effort to put on compared to pulling on a sweater over your head.

More tips :

- Choose lightweight clothes (not too heavy).
- Wear thin fabrics (not too hot).
- Wear layers (for warmth).
- Make sure your clothes are loose enough (not too tight).
- Fasten your bra in front and then turn it around or use a front-fastening bra. You can also wear a camisole if the bra feels too tight.
- Wear closed-toe shoes that are easy to put on.
- To pull on your socks and shoes, raise your leg toward you to avoid bending forward.



Washing

Bathing or washing yourself is probably the most difficult task, as this demands a lot of effort and can trigger episodes of severe shortness of breath. Divide this action into four steps : planning, washing, getting out of the shower or bathtub, and washing your hair.

Planning is essential.



Prepare your environment

- Adjust the room temperature: open the door to reduce the humidity level.
- Use a fan.
- Adjust the water temperature (not too hot, as heat creates humidity).
- Take your medication to open your airways if you have any (e.g. inhalers).
- Install grab bars on the wall and use a bath bench in the shower to increase your stability and preserve your energy.
- Use a non-slip bath mat in your shower or bathtub.

Washing

- Start with the areas that require the most effort: feet and legs.
- Inhale while at rest and exhale when moving (use the breathing technique).

Getting out of the shower or bathtub

- Towelling off takes a lot of energy.
- Sit down.
- Do not wipe yourself: use an absorbent bathrobe made of cotton or wrap yourself in a large towel.
- If you must towel yourself off, use a hand towel or a wash cloth, which is lighter and requires less arm movement.

Washing your hair

Washing your hair can take a lot of energy since you have to move your arms over your head. A good way to reduce shortness of breath is to bring your head toward your hand and not the other way around. You will see in the following pictures that Diane's head is tilted down and her elbows are supported on the counter or on the edge of the bathtub.

You should therefore move your head, not your arms. Using a handheld shower at your kitchen sink or in your bath is ideal. You can also dilute your shampoo in another bottle to make rinsing easier.

Use a small towel to blot your wet hair.

If you are using a hair dryer, use the same position. Rest your elbows on the table; again, move your head and not your arms.

ATTENTION!

You must turn off or remove your oxygen source when using a hair dryer.



Cooking

Breathing during all the different activities of daily living requires energy. A balanced diet is a source of this needed energy.

As much as possible, divide up your meal preparation into steps. Don't hesitate to use the recovery positions to reduce your shortness of breath. Remember to take your time.

Preparing your food

- Put your chosen food items on the counter.
- Choose small, lightweight foods.
- If you have heavier foods, place them on the top shelf of your refrigerator. This will keep you from having to bend over to pick them up.
- If you have a lot of space in your kitchen, using a wheeled cart may be helpful.
- Choose recipes that are simple to prepare and nourishing.
- Cut your foods with a light knife.
- You could also consider cutting your vegetables a day ahead.
- Don't hesitate to rest multiple times if needed.



Cooking your food

- Turn on the range hood.
- Avoid frying foods and avoid strong smells.
- Don't hesitate to ask for help for this step.

ATTENTION!

When using the stove, you must shut off
or remove your oxygen source.

Household chores

Maintaining your home requires a lot of energy and is not always easy, especially if you live alone. It's important to figure out the tasks that are a priority so that you can manage your energy.

Here are some helpful tips :

Making the bed

- Avoid using heavy bedding when making/changing your bed.
- Move around the bed instead of extending your arms.
- Avoid lifting the mattress when putting on the sheets.

Cleaning the floors

Avoid washing every floor in the house on the same day.

- Focus on a small area at a time.
- Use a light mop with your arms resting against your body; move your wrists instead.

Cleaning the counters and dusting

- Make small movements.
- Consider purchasing tools with a telescopic handle.

Washing dishes and emptying the dishwasher

- Divide the task into several steps.
- Leaning your arm on the counter will reduce shortness of breath.
- Take a few moments to rest.
- Sit on a stool or chair while doing this task.



Lean on the counter



Lean on the counter



Keep your arms alongside
your body

Moving around your environment

Moving around is a key part of your daily routine.

Here are some helpful tips to encourage you to walk longer.

Using a walker may be a good option as it will allow you to :

- Save energy.
- Rest while standing, as it provides mobile support.
- Sit down to rest.
- Carry a bag, package, purse or oxygen tank to keep weight off your shoulders.

Adjust the height of your walker to the crease of your wrist.
Refer to the image below.

Depending on your environment, consider putting chairs in different locations in your house (in between connecting rooms, at the entrance to your house, outside doors and in the garage, etc.).

Walking is the best activity to maintain your mobility and independence!



Exercising

Staying active is essential to maintaining your quality of life and independence.

Unfortunately, wishful thinking will not improve your activity level. Your level of independence depends on a well-established routine and exercise plan that you do proactively.

A lack of endurance, episodes of shortness of breath, and a loss of muscle strength can make simple daily activities more difficult. An appropriate exercise program can improve muscle strength, increase exercise tolerance, reduce fatigue and decrease your shortness of breath, both at rest and during exertion.



Living With a Lung Disease

Exercising is not about lifting weights everyday. It's about helping you get a glass of water, do your chores, go up and down the stairs, get your mail, or take a walk.

It's important to continue walking everyday. Using a pedometer can be a good way to motivate yourself. Some smartwatches and cell phones have apps that help you track your steps.

You can also exercise with weights or exercise bands to strengthen your muscles. Riding a stationary bike or using a treadmill are also good ways to exercise.

Controlling your breathing is essential. Avoid holding your breath while exercising.



Outdoor trips

If you have to leave the house for a medical appointment or any other reason, try to limit your activities the day before.

If you have to go shopping, do not hesitate to lean on a cart. Walking in that position will help reduce any shortness of breath.

Try to be flexible when planning non-essential trips. Only go out if you have enough energy. It's better to postpone an activity rather than overexert yourself.

During the winter, breathe into a scarf.

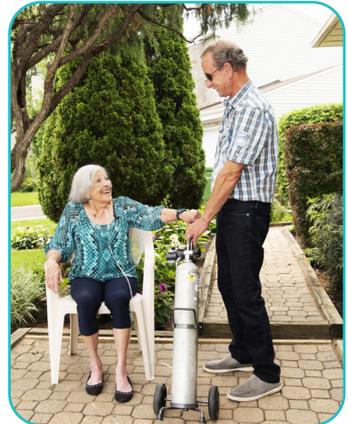
During the summer, use a small handheld fan.

Once again, controlling your breathing is essential.

Inhale for 2 seconds and exhale for 4 seconds while walking.

Breathe out or exhale gently and for a longer period.

You should not feel uncomfortable about having to go out with an oxygen tank. Keep in mind that oxygen allows you to visit your friends and family and do the activities that you enjoy.



Hobbies

Despite the progressive nature of your respiratory disease, it's important to pursue activities or hobbies that interest you.

"I have many hobbies and would like to share with you the tips I have learned over the years to continue to fully enjoy them," says Diane.

I love gardening :

- Ask for help to carry your tools.
- Set a timer to remind yourself to take a break every 15 to 30 minutes. It's important not to wait to be out of breath before stopping. This helps you keep up your energy for other daily activities.
- Respect your limits.
- Use a stable object to lift yourself up from the ground.
- Do not hesitate to get longer oxygen tubing.



I also enjoy swimming in the pool :

- You can swim in a pool with oxygen.
- Choose the best moment of the day.
- Avoid direct sun and days with intense heat.
- Walking in the pool or leaning on the edge while doing leg movements are great exercises.



I love going to the movies :

- Check in advance if the theatre has wheelchair access to avoid walking long distances.
- Select an adapted seat close to an exit.
- Arrive early to avoid crowds and take your time when leaving.

I like eating out in a restaurant :

- If you are using a portable concentrator, you can ask to be seated near an electrical outlet.
- Avoid busy times at restaurants.

We hope that these helpful tips will inspire you to stay active and independent. If you are living with a chronic illness, you can still live a full life and have hope for the future.

The most important thing is to have confidence in yourself. You will soon find your own strategies to stay active and independent!



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Other health publications and resources are available in French from the website of the Centre d'information pour l'utilisateur et ses proches (CIUP).

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