

Handheld fan

Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio CD, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language please contact the PALS desk on 01271 314090 or at rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net.

The information on this leaflet is designed to help you to manage chronic (long-term) breathlessness. If your breathlessness is new or getting worse, then you should seek advice from your doctor.

How can a handheld fan help my breathlessness?

Research studies have found that the use of handheld fans can be beneficial in reducing the sensation of breathlessness. Having a stream of cool air blown towards your face helps to stimulate the nerves around your nose and mouth. This triggers a response to slow your breathing pattern and manage your breathlessness.

You may also find desktop or tall standing fans, opening windows or holding a cold flannel against your face can also help control breathlessness.

Are handheld fans safe?

There are no known problems associated with the use of handheld fans. Make sure you keep the blades of the fan away from your hands and face.

How to use a handheld fan effectively

When you feel breathless, adopt a comfortable position, such as sitting forwards, sitting with a backrest or leaning forwards in standing.

Fans with three or more blades are most effective as they provide a stronger flow of air.

Hold your fan approximately 6 inches (15cm) from your face. Aim the draught of air towards the central part of your face so that you feel the draught around the sides of your nose and top lip. You should feel a benefit within a few minutes.

When should I use my handheld fan?

You can use your fan whenever you feel breathless and as often as required. You may find it useful to use your fan when you need a rest when moving, or for sudden breathlessness when you are still. Use your fan as long as you need to help ease your breathlessness.

Keep your fan in your pocket when you go out and keep a fan by your bedside in case you wake up breathless in the night.

You can use your fan with other methods such as positioning, relaxation and breathing exercises. Ask your physiotherapist for further advice on these.

Further information

British Lung Foundation: 03000 030 555

Short of Breath Club (Wrafton): Mandy Chugg 07977344693

Pulmonary Fibrosis Trust: 01543 442191

For more information about your chronic respiratory condition and shortness of breath please see the following links.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/shortness-of-breath/>

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/clinical-policy/respiratory-disease/>

References

Cambridge University Hospitals' Breathlessness Intervention Service.

Contributions of a hand-held fan to self-management of chronic breathlessness (Lockett et al, 2017) <https://erj.ersjournals.com/content/50/2/1700262>

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

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