



LIVING WITH DAILY BREATHLESSNESS

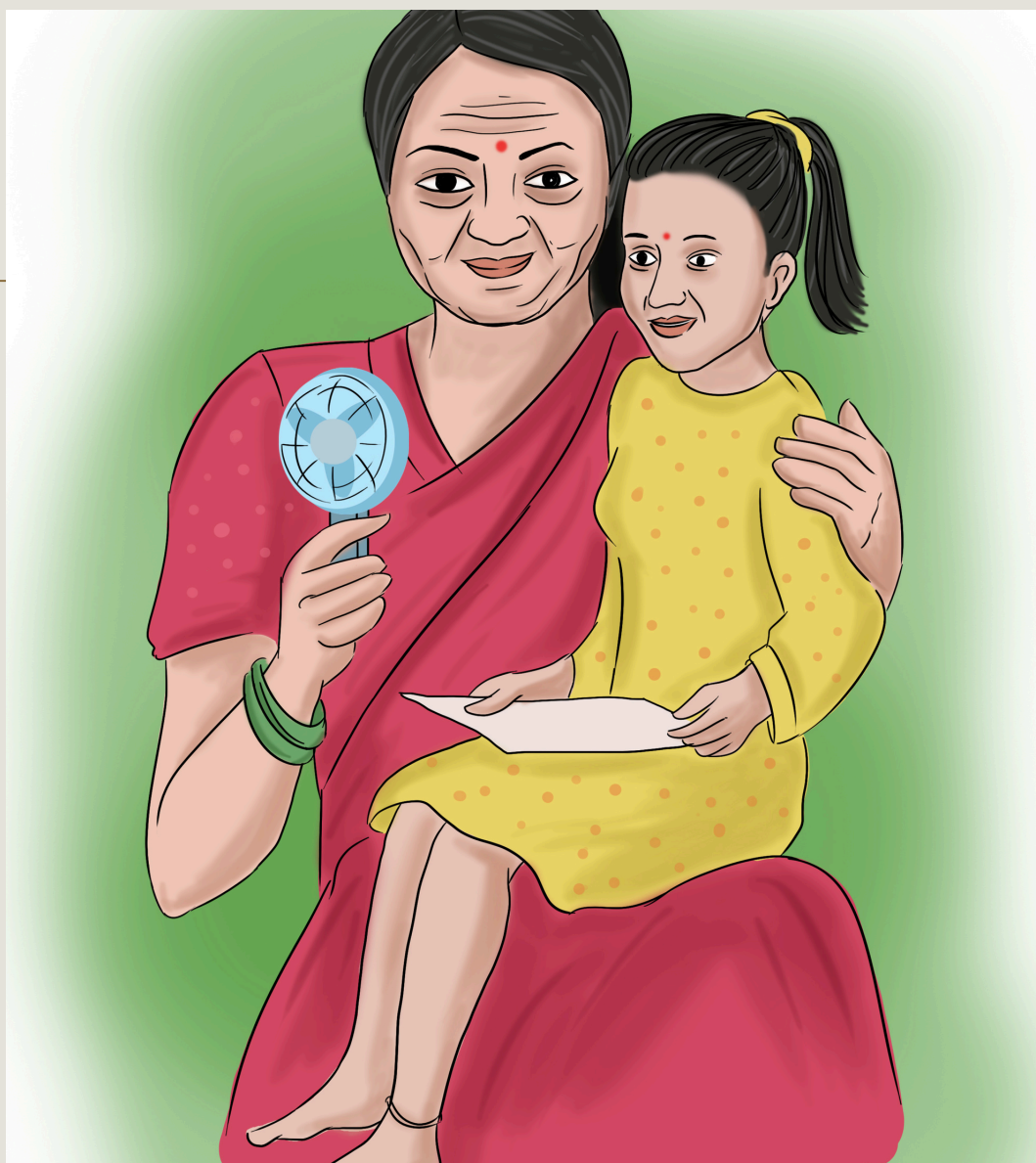


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What is daily breathlessness?

Breathlessness is our body's natural response to physical or emotional effort. However, some people feel uncomfortably out of breath every day even when doing their usual everyday activities. This is called **daily breathlessness**.

The Three D's of daily breathlessness;

- Daily – breathlessness every day (e.g. breathless even with walking).
- Distressing – - breathlessness causes distress to the person and/or family members.
- Disabling – breathlessness makes it difficult to do usual activities or things you enjoy

People with daily breathlessness say that they sometimes feel:

- Invisible – they often do not look sick, so others may not realise how hard it can be. Physical and emotional effort can make breathlessness worse and people can avoid social and work activities so that they do not become breathless
- Unsafe – they can worry that they are not getting enough air and that they may die.
- Anxious – they worry about breathing, which can make their breathlessness worse.

This booklet aims to help you deal with these feelings by providing simple advice about things you can do to live better with daily breathlessness. Remember, you are not alone.

What is daily breathlessness?

Daily breathlessness is a very common problem but is often misunderstood. It is often due to long-term illness and lack of fitness. **It is not just a normal part of getting older.**

This booklet tells you what to do when you become breathless and what you do to live as well as possible with daily breathlessness. Friends and family may be worried about you and keen to help. Each section includes tips of what you can do at home and how your friends and family can provide support.

Note: It is important to always follow the advice of your doctor. If you do not know why you get breathless, you should speak with a healthcare professional.

DID YOU KNOW?

The tips and techniques in this booklet are all recommended by doctors as part of modern medicine.



The booklet is divided into two sections.

Section One aims to relieve fear and distress caused by breathlessness by providing simple guidance on how to deal with your breathlessness and how to regain control of your breathing.

Section Two encourages you to keep moving and how to stay safe and strong when doing activities with breathlessness

Section 1: Regaining control of your breathing

BREATHE INDIA

Breathlessness can happen even when doing normal things like walking a short distance.

Although it can be frightening, it is good to do activities which make you breathless, to keep your strength and to enjoy life. Using the techniques in this section can help you feel more confident that if you do get breathless, you know what to do to regain control.



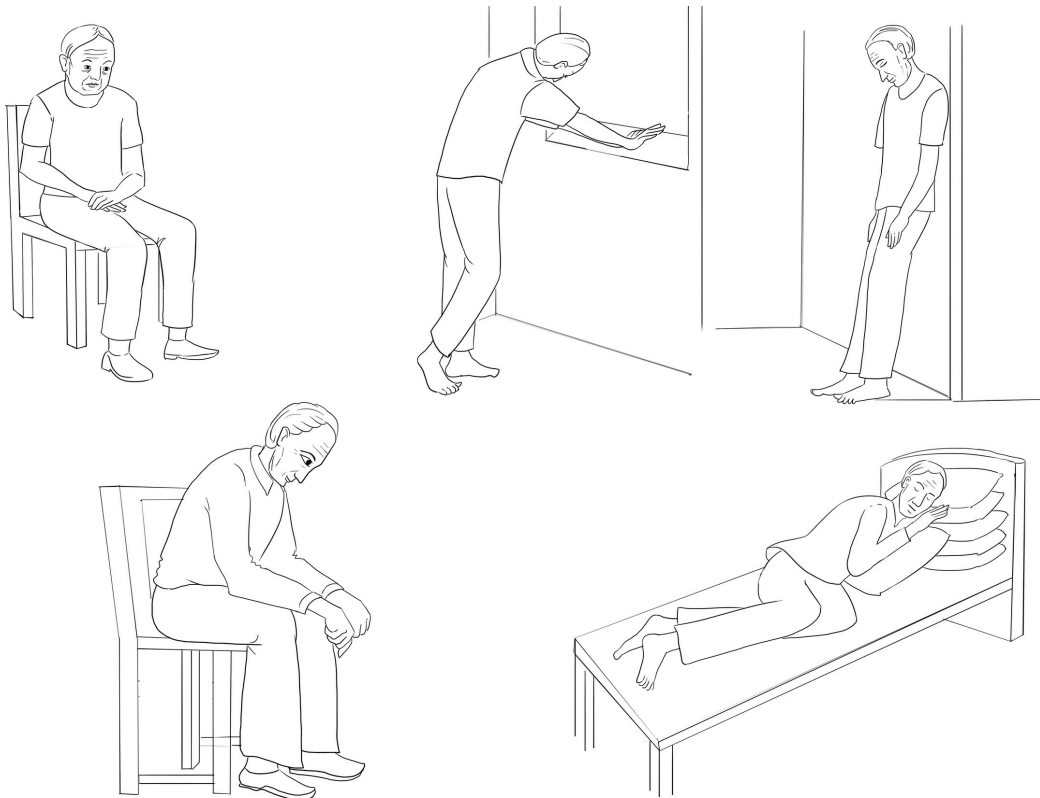
DID YOU KNOW?
ALTHOUGH BREATHLESSNESS
FEELS UNCOMFORTABLE AND
SOMETIMES FRIGHTENING,
BREATHLESSNESS IS NOT
HARMFUL – AND FINDING
WAYS TO RECOVER QUICKLY
WILL HELP YOU KEEP MOVING.

Many of the tips in this booklet can be used anywhere – whether you are home or out and about. Often, even taking a short rest can help.

Regaining control of your breathing

FIND A COMFORTABLE POSITION

When you feel breathless, finding a comfortable position can help you breathe with less effort and recover more quickly.



Many people find the most comfortable position for breathing is sitting down and leaning forwards, with their elbows on their knees. If you are outside, try leaning onto something or leaning back onto a wall. Test different positions and find out which suits you best.

Friends and family can help by:

- Helping you find a comfortable position
- Providing support when you are standing

Regaining control of your breathing

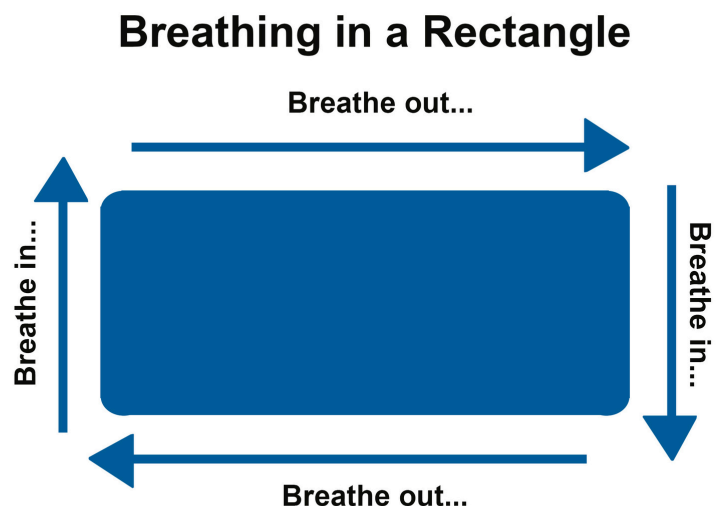
REMEMBER TO BREATHE OUT

When people are breathless, they often focus on breathing in and forget to breathe out. This means that they might overfill their lungs leaving no space for new air.

If you feel breathless, try to focus on breathing out to empty your lungs, making room for new air. Focus on breathing out slowly (like you are blowing on a hot drink). Your next breath in will come naturally. Focus on extending your out-breath until you regain full control.

Rectangle breathing

Rectangle breathing can help you focus on breathing out. Try looking at something with a rectangle shape for this technique, such as a picture frame, a door or even a book or TV.



Follow the sides of the rectangle with your eyes, breathing out along the long edge, and breathing in along the short edge. You may need to use it several times until feelings of breathlessness and panic have gone away. Keep practising.

Friends and family can help by:

- Reminding you to breathe out if you feel panicked.
- Reminding you to breathe during physical exertion
- Practicing rectangle breathing with you.

Regaining control of your breathing

USE A FAN, COOL DOWN

When you feel very breathless, you may also feel hot and in need of fresh air.

Scientific research shows that using a fan to direct cool air to your face helps relieve breathlessness and regain breath quicker. If you don't have a fan, use a cool facecloth, or spray of cool water, on your face or on the back of your neck. This may also help make you feel more comfortable when breathless.



Taking a fan with you when you leave the house can help you feel more confident that you can recover quickly if you get breathless!

Friends and family can help by:

- Fanning your face
- Using a cool facecloth on your face or neck

DID YOU KNOW?

ALTHOUGH IT IS A COMMON BELIEF, COOL AIR WON'T MAKE YOU CATCH A COLD BUT MIGHT HELP YOU RECOVER YOUR BREATH. TRY IT AND FEEL THE DIFFERENCE!

Section 2: Living with daily breathlessness

BREATHE INDIA

Many people with daily breathlessness stop doing everyday activities or things they enjoy because they fear that it will make them feel breathless. Family and friends might also worry about you doing things which make you breathless. Unfortunately moving less makes your muscles weaker and more likely to get breathless.

Section One gave advice on how to regain control of your breathing when you become breathless. This section gives you some simple ways you can **move more** and stay as active as possible to help you keep your fitness.



DID YOU KNOW?

BREATHLESSNESS IS OUR BODY'S NATURAL WAY TO RESPOND TO MORE PHYSICAL OR EMOTIONAL EFFORT. IT IS HEALTHY TO GET A LITTLE BIT BREATHLESS EVERY DAY!

Living with daily breathlessness

BREATHE INDIA

MOVE MORE, SIT DOWN LESS

Regular movement is good for your breathing because it keeps the muscles in your body strong. The muscles will need less oxygen to work, so you will breathe more efficiently while moving.

Rest might seem like the right thing to do, but too much rest will reduce your fitness, which makes you become breathless more easily.

Move every hour

Try to get up and do something – such as making a cup of tea, walking around your home, watering plants – every hour during the day. Even standing up then sitting down a few times can be helpful.



Blow as you go

When we do more activity than usual, such as climbing the stairs or walking up a slope, we can hold our breath without realising it.

Try breathing out for two steps and breathing in for one step. This may help you manage the extra effort better and mean you recover more quickly.

Friends and family can help by:

- Encouraging you to walk every day, even if it is only around your home
- Reminding you to breathe when you are being active

Living with daily breathlessness

PACE YOURSELF!

Pacing is about accepting that you will need to take breaks during the day and making a plan.

- Try not to rush things or do too much at once – this can tire you out, making you both feel worse in the long run
- Have a mix of being active and resting

You might not know when you will have energy and when you won't.

Decide the activities or tasks which are important to you and plan what to do first. Bigger tasks can be broken into smaller steps e.g., climbing the stairs, stop and recover your breath every few steps and carry on.



Friends and family can help by:

- Encouraging to move even if might make you a little bit breathless
- Remind you to take rest before you have used all of your energy
- Help you plan what is most important to use your energy on first

Living with daily breathlessness

WALKING AIDS

If you find walking makes you short of breath, using a walking aid can help you can get back on your feet, and increase the distance you are able to work with comfort.

A walking aid helps your arms to be in the best position for you to breathe efficiently and to recover if you need to stop for a few minutes. Some also have seats which takes away the worry that there may be nowhere to sit down if you need rest.



Friends and family can help by:

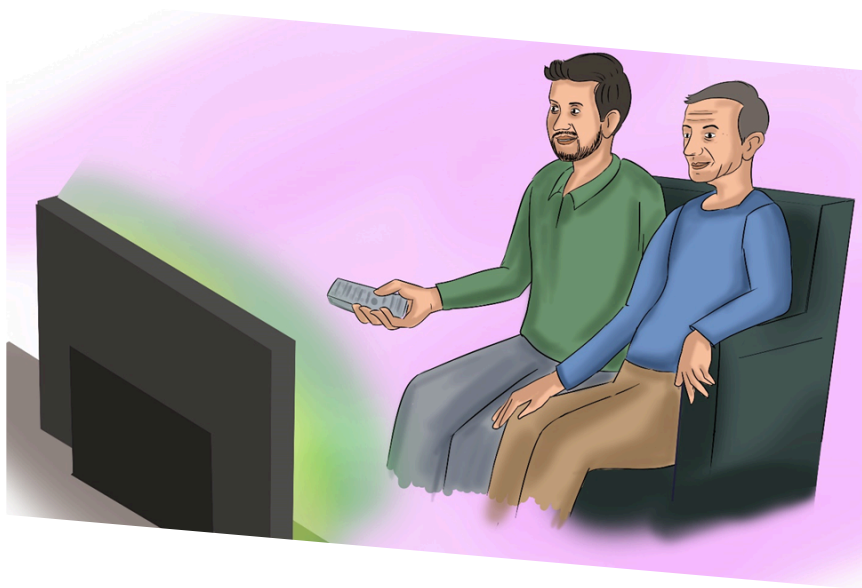
- Joining you for a walk if you feel nervous about being by yourself
- Making sure the walking aid is within easy reach
- Reminding you to take a fan with you

Living with daily breathlessness

TRY TO RELAX!

Daily breathlessness can be upsetting. Stress can make worries worse, your muscles tight and it can be harder for you to regain control of your breathing.

If you are calm, you are more likely to be able to control your breathing.



Some things which people find helpful are to relax are:

- Listening to music
- Sitting down and sipping a drink
- Distracting yourself – try to focus on something else to take your mind off your breathing if you can, such as watching TV, talking with family or friends, or thinking of a nice relaxing place.
- Techniques to relax muscles
- Meditation
- Yoga

Friends and family can help by:

- Helping you to get the balance between keeping active, but also taking rest.
- Trying relaxation exercises with you – they are good for all of us

Living with daily breathlessness

FOOD AND DRINK

Chewing certain foods might make you feel breathless. Maintaining a balanced diet is very important to keep you strong.



If you are finding eating difficult, try eating small amounts of soft foods regularly to make sure you get enough nutrition. Sipping a drink may also help.

DID YOU KNOW?
YOU CAN STILL EAT YOUR
FAVOURITE FOODS IF YOU
HAVE BREATHLESSNESS

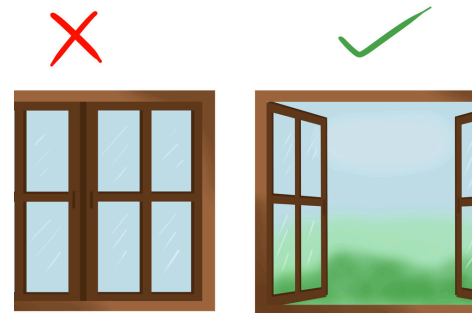
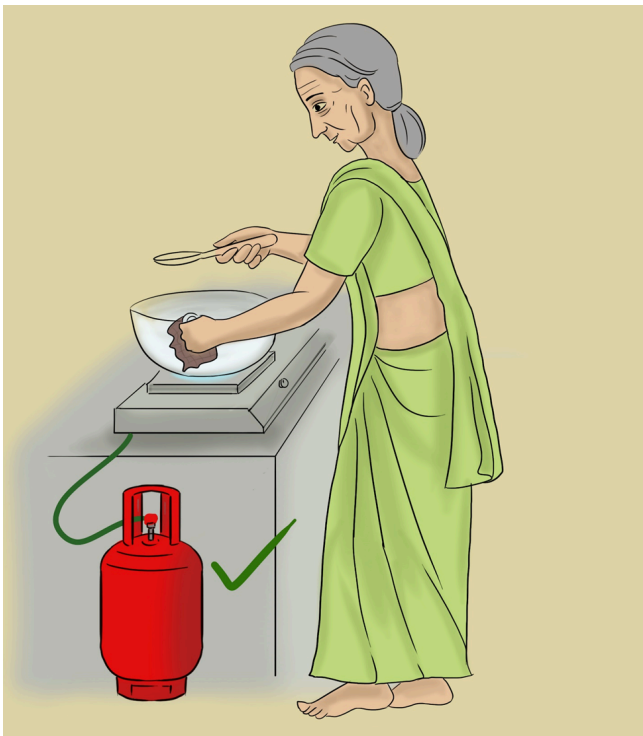
Friends and family can help by:

- Preparing soft food which is not difficult to chew if this is a problem
- Encourage smaller portions but more frequently throughout the day

Things to avoid!

Your lungs need clean air to help you breathe easily. Smoke from tobacco, mosquito coils and cooking, dust, traffic fumes and other forms of air pollution will make you breathing more difficult. If possible, you should **avoid**:

- Smoking tobacco
- Doing activities which make you breathless during times of high air pollution
- Indoor fires and cooking without ventilation like a chimney or open window



If you are unable to avoid these things, using a face mask will reduce the amount of polluted air that you breathe in.

Friends and family can help by:

Ensuring a supply of masks is available

Closing the windows if there is high air pollution outside

opening the windows if you are cooking indoors on an open fire

Refraining from smoking around you

Using gas to cook with if possible

Conclusion



Being breathless most days is very common everywhere in the world. But we don't talk about it enough with our friends, family or health care workers and so we don't get help. This leaflet offers you help to breathe well, move more and live better. Try out these simple ways and find out what works best for you

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GET IN TOUCH

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If you have any questions about the information in this booklet then please send a message to the team at Karunashraya Hospice in Bengaluru.