

Pursed lips breathing exercises: managing breathlessness and anxiety (for patients self-isolating with suspected Coronavirus – COVID-19)

The key symptoms of COVID-19 virus are cough, fever, breathlessness, anxiety, delirium and agitation, but you may also have fatigue, muscle ache and headache. Please note that severe breathlessness may cause anxiety, which may increase the breathlessness further. This leaflet has some simple breathing exercises you can do to help relieve the symptoms of breathlessness and anxiety if you are self-isolating at home.

The following tips should help you to manage breathlessness and anxiety:

1) **Environment**

- If you are self-isolating alone, improve air circulation by opening a window or door (do not use a fan as this can spread the infection). Keep the room cool.

2) **Positioning**

- Sit upright to increase peak ventilation (make it easier to breathe more effectively) and reduce airway obstruction (keep your airway clear).
- Relax and drop your shoulder, which reduces the ‘hunched posture’ that comes with anxiety.
- Alternatively, sit in a chair leaning forward, with your elbows resting on your knees or your elbows resting on a table.

3) **Pursed-lips breathing exercise**

- This breathing technique will help you to regain a sense of control and improve your breathing muscle strength.
- Please carry out this technique alone in a room while you are self-isolating.
- Repeat the exercises 3 or 4 times a day for 2 to 3 minutes only.

If symptoms of cough and breathlessness get worse then stop doing the exercise and contact 111 or 999 as appropriate.

	<p>Step 1 Sit upright against the back of an armchair. Rest your arms on the chair arms or on your thighs</p>
	<p>Step 2 Breathe in (inhale) through your nose for 3 to 4 seconds with your mouth closed.</p>
	<p>Step 3 Breathe out (exhale) slowly through pursed lips for 4 to 6 seconds. Imagine that you are blowing out a candle when you breathe out.</p>

Reference:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng163/chapter/6-Managing-breathlessness>

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