

Dysfunctional breathing and lifestyle

Will changing my lifestyle help my breathing?

Try to recognise the situations that bring on your over-breathing (e.g. stressful meeting) and try to spend a few minutes calming your breathing down before the stressful situation.

How can I breathe when exercising?

Try to maintain nose breathing with slow regular breathing control. If you find this difficult you may benefit from counting your steps as you breathe in and out, i.e. breathe in for 2 steps, breathe out for 3 steps. Try different ratios and find out what is best for you. Exercise can be a good way of increasing your general feeling of well-being and self confidence.

Can breathing affect my speech?

Often people who hyperventilate do not breathe sufficiently while speaking. This results in sentences becoming very long with small snatched breaths from the top part of their lungs. Try to maintain a smooth, slow speech pattern, breathing at regular intervals. Practice reading aloud using punctuation to help you control your breathing pattern.

Does my diet and the way I eat affect my breathing?

Variations in your blood sugar levels can contribute to your symptoms. Avoid large meals, particularly late at night.

- Eat regularly.
- Eat healthy snacks between meals.
- Always sit with good posture while eating.
- Chew food slowly and quietly.
- Reduce the consumption of caffeine (e.g. coffee, tea, cola).

If my sleep is disturbed what can I do?

If you can control your breathing during the day, practice it before going to sleep at night or if you wake up. Use a relaxing routine before going to bed (e.g. no TV / tablet / phone screens, quiet environment, not eating directly before going to bed, complete 5 minutes of meditation).

Further information and advice

Further reading – ‘Hyperventilation Syndrome’ by Dinah Bradley
www.physiotherapyforbpd.org.uk