How to Overcome Shortness of Breath

Coping With Illness

When you're having trouble breathing, performing special exercises will help you feel better. Practice these exercises twice a day for 5 to 10 minutes until you get used to doing them.

**Abdominal Breathing**

1. Lie comfortably on your back and place a pillow beneath your head. Bend your knees to relax your stomach.

2. Press one hand on your stomach lightly but with enough force to create slight pressure. Rest the other hand on your chest.

3. Now breathe slowly through your nose, using your stomach muscles. The hand on your stomach should rise during inspiration and fall during expiration. The hand on your chest should remain almost still.

**Pursed-lip breathing**

1. Breathe in slowly through your nose to avoid gulping air. Hold your breath as you count to yourself: one-1,000; two-1,000; three-1,000.

2. Purse your lips as if you're going to whistle.

3. Now, breathe out slowly through pursed lips as you count to yourself: one-1,000; two-1,000; three-1,000; four-1,000; five-1,000; six-1,000.

You should make a soft, whistling sound while you breathe out. Exhaling through pursed lips slows down your breathing and helps get rid of the stale air trapped in your lungs.

When performing pursed-lip breathing during activity, inhale before exerting yourself; exhale while performing the activity.

If the recommended counting rhythm feels awkward, find one that feels more comfortable. Keep in mind that you must breathe out longer than you breathe in.