



Your Company

Family Caregiver Resources

Questions? Call Us!

[Your Phone Number]

Helpful tips for family caregivers in [Your Community Name]

Trouble Breathing



It's common for people with a serious illness to experience trouble breathing. This is especially true if they have a lung condition. They might describe the feeling as "shortness of breath," "tightness in the chest," or "fighting for air."

It's scary when someone can't breathe. Fortunately, there are ways to make it easier.



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How you can help

- **Raise the head of the bed.** If you don't have a hospital bed, use pillows. Lying flat makes breathing more difficult. Sitting more upright relieves pressure on the chest.
- **Open a window.** Fresh air is refreshing! If weather permits and the air is clear (no smog or smoke, low pollen count), this can be a natural way to promote easy breathing.
- **Run a fan.** If your loved one enjoys it, you can even point the fan to blow air directly towards his or her face.
- **Add moisture to the room.** Hot air and a dry throat can make it harder to breathe. A simple humidifier adds moisture and soothes the airways.
- **Turn to lie on one side.** Some positions are more comfortable than others. Experiment to find out which ones feel best for your loved one.

Changes at home:

- **No smoking.** This applies to the patient, but also to others. Second hand smoke clogs the air and makes it harder for the lungs to do their job.
- **Eliminate or reduce strong smells.** Perfumes, bleach, household cleaners, and paint fumes all represent chemical particles in the air.
- **Remove dust and replace air filters.** A thorough dusting will remove this common irritant. (Best to do this on a day when your relative can be out of the house!) Replacing furnace and air conditioning filters will also reduce particles in the air.



707.477.0700

Elder Pages Online supports older adults in [Your Service Area] as they plan for their later years.

Give us a call at [Your Phone] to find out how we can support you.

Which of these strategies will work in your situation?

Anxiety

Anxiety is a natural response to not having enough air. It's almost a reflex. Addressing the anxiety can do a lot to improve your relative's daily experience of life.

- **Deep breathing.** When people get anxious, they take shorter breaths and breathe more quickly. This can actually make things worse as shallow breathing does not clear the air sacs of the lungs so there is less room for bringing in fresh oxygen. Taking slow, very measured breaths, is not only calming, it also helps solve the problem with lack of oxygen. Sitting upright, inhale slowly for a count of 4. Then try for a sustained exhale over a count of 4. Start again.
- **Guided imagery.** Visualizations can help ease the mind and reduce anxiety. With closed eyes, have your loved one imagine a place that is calm and peaceful. Perhaps the beach or the mountains. Draw on as many senses as possible. Describe the smell of the ocean, the wind on the face, the sound of the waves lapping gently on shore. Immerse your loved one in a tranquil environment.

Where would your loved one like to "go" to relax?



Ask us about prescribing:

- **Breathing exercises.** Depending on your loved one's condition, there are simple exercises that can help. Something as simple as singing favorite songs might help. It doesn't feel like exercise yet it naturally (and joyfully!) encourages deeper inhales and stronger exhales.
- **Oxygen therapy.** Providing your loved one with more concentrated oxygen is another way to improve feelings of breathlessness. There are significant lifestyle changes that come with using oxygen. There can be no smoking in the house. (Oxygen is extremely flammable!) And your loved one will need to have a canula (plastic tube) across the face under the nose. It also requires keeping an oxygen tube nearby. (They often come with little carts, or small canisters that can be carried in a large handbag or backpack.) For all that, oxygen therapy can be extremely effective in providing adequate air.
- **Medications.** Depending on the source of the breathing problem, there are drugs that can help. Ask us about prescriptions that would be most effective for your relative's situation.

24/7 Phone Support



Not sure what to do?
Have a question or concern?

Before calling 911
Call us at 707.477.0700.

We have a nurse on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

We are happy to answer your questions, big and small.

We will walk you through whatever you need to do.
You don't have to do this alone.



Your Company

My Plan: