

# Pursed Lip Breathing

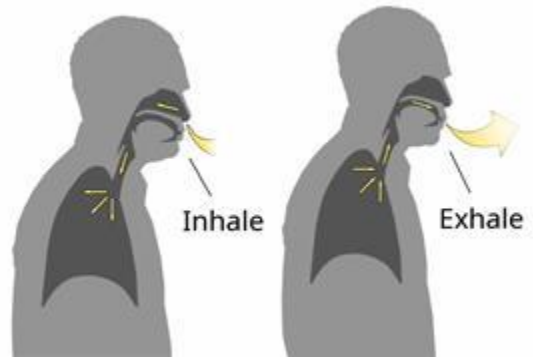
Pursed lip breathing is a technique to relieve the feeling of being short of breath. Some long-term respiratory conditions, such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and severe asthma, can make it hard to breathe out (*exhale*) all the air in your lungs. This can cause air that has less oxygen than normal to build up in your lungs (*air trapping*). Trapped air means your lungs fill with less fresh air when you breathe in, or inhale. As a result, you feel short of breath.

Pursed lip breathing keeps your airways open longer when you exhale and empties more air from your lungs. This makes more space for fresh air when you inhale. Pursed lip breathing can also slow down your breathing and keep your body from having to work so hard to breathe. Over time, pursed lip breathing may help you be able to be more physically active and do more activities. You should use this breathing technique during the most difficult part of any activity, such as when bending over or climbing stairs.

## How to perform pursed lip breathing

Being short of breath can make you tense and anxious. Before you start this breathing exercise, take a minute to relax your shoulders and close your eyes. Then:

1. Start the exercise by closing your mouth.
2. Breathe in through your nose, taking a normal breath. You can do this at your normal rate of breathing. If you feel you are not getting enough air, breathe in while slowly counting to 2 or 3.
3. Pucker (*purse*) your lips as if you were going to whistle.
4. Gently tighten the muscles of your abdomen or press on your abdomen to help push the air out.
5. Breathe out slowly through your pursed lips. Take at least twice as long to breathe out as it takes you to breathe in.
6. Make sure that you breathe out all of the air, but do not force air out.
7. Ask your health care provider how often and how long to do this exercise.



## Follow these instructions at home:

- Take over-the-counter and prescription medicines only as told by your health care provider.
- **Do not** use any products that contain nicotine or tobacco. These products include cigarettes, chewing tobacco, and vaping devices, such as e-cigarettes. If you need help quitting, ask your health care provider.
- Return to your normal activities as told by your health care provider. Ask your health care provider what activities are safe for you.
- Keep all follow-up visits. This is important.

## Where to find more information

- American Lung Association: [lung.org](http://lung.org)

## Contact a health care provider if:

- Your shortness of breath gets worse.
- You become less able to exercise or be physically active.
- You develop a cough.
- You develop a fever.
- You experience problems with this breathing technique.

## Get help right away if:

- You are struggling to breathe.
- Your shortness of breath prevents you from doing any activity.

**These symptoms may represent a serious problem that is an emergency. Do not wait to see if the symptoms will go away. Get medical help right away. Call your local emergency services (911 in the U.S.). Do not drive yourself to the hospital.**

## Summary

- Pursed lip breathing is a breathing technique that helps to remove trapped air from your lungs. This technique helps you get more oxygen into your lungs.
- Pursed lip breathing can help slow down your breathing and keeps your body from having to work so hard to breathe.
- When performing this technique, take at least twice as long to breathe out as it takes you to breathe in.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.