

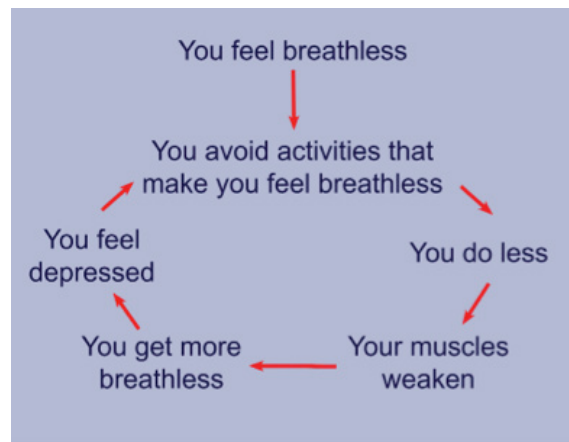
## Breathing Techniques?

**Before starting these techniques, ask your health care provider if they are right for you.**

Having COPD makes it harder to breathe. And when it's hard to breathe, it's normal to get anxious, making you feel even more short of breath.

There are two breathing techniques that can help you get the air you need without working so hard to breathe: **pursed-lips breathing** and **diaphragmatic (also called belly or abdominal) breathing**.

*Better Breathing Tip: It's normal to hold your shoulders tense and high. Before starting any breathing technique, take a minute to drop your shoulders down, close your eyes, and relax.*



## Pursed-Lips Breathing

This breathing technique helps you focus, slow your breathing down and stay calm. Pursed-lips breathing should be used during and after exercise. It should be used with any activity that makes you feel short of breath.

To do pursed-lips breathing:

1. Breathe in through your nose (as if you are smelling something) for about 2 seconds.
2. Pucker your lips like you're getting ready to blow out candles on a birthday cake.
3. Breathe out very slowly through pursed-lips, two to three times longer than you breathed in.
4. Repeat.



Pursed-lips breathing helps with the following:

- Slows your breathing down
- Keeps airways open longer so your lungs can get rid of more stale, trapped air
- Reduces the work of breathing
- Increases the amount of time you can exercise or perform an activity
- Improves the exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide

## Breathing From the Diaphragm:

This type of breathing is also called abdominal breathing or "belly" breathing. Your abdomen should rise when you breathe in. It should lower as you breathe out. Your diaphragm is the muscle that separates the chest cavity from the stomach. Your diaphragm is your main muscle of breathing. When the diaphragm muscle tightens, the lungs

expand. It is designed to do most of the work of breathing. When you have COPD, the diaphragm doesn't work as well and muscles in the neck, shoulders and back are used. These muscles don't do much to move your air. Training your diaphragm to take over more "work of breathing" can help.

**Diaphragmatic breathing is not as easy to do as pursed-lips breathing. It is recommended that you get instruction from a respiratory health care professional or physical therapist experienced in teaching it.**

It is best to try this technique for the first time when you are feeling rested and relaxed and while sitting back or lying down.

1. Place one hand on your abdomen. Place one hand on your upper chest.
2. Focus your breathing on your abdomen.
3. As you breathe in, the hand on your abdomen should rise.
4. As you breathe out, the hand on your abdomen should lower.
5. Breathe in through the nose. Breathe out slowly through pursed lips.
6. Practice this 2 to 3 times a day for 5 to 10 minutes. Start by doing it while lying on your back. Then try it while sitting. Then try it while standing. Finally, try it while doing an activity.

As you become more comfortable with this type of breathing, you can use it to reduce your feelings of shortness of breath. You can use diaphragmatic breathing with all daily activities, such as:

- With stair climbing
- With long walks
- After carrying or lifting
- When showering
- With all daily activities
- When exercising



*Jane Martin, Asst Director of Education, discusses and demonstrates pursed lip breathing and diaphragmatic breathing techniques.*

View at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZJPjZRHmy8&t=5s>

## Better Breathing Tip: Stop, Reset, Continue

When you are feeling short of breath during exercise or regular activities, use these 3 steps:

1. Stop your activity.
2. Reset by sitting down, relax your shoulders, and do pursed-lips breathing until you catch your breath.
3. Continue activity, doing pursed-lips breathing as you go. Go at a slower pace if you need to.

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The COPD Foundation offers resources such as [COPD360social](#), an online community where you can connect with patients, caregivers and health care providers and ask questions, share your experiences and receive and provide support.