

# Managing Breathlessness in Post COVID-19 Recovery

## Post-COVID-19

Interdisciplinary Clinical Care Network

Recovery | Care | Research | Education

► It is very common for people recovering from COVID-19 to feel breathless.

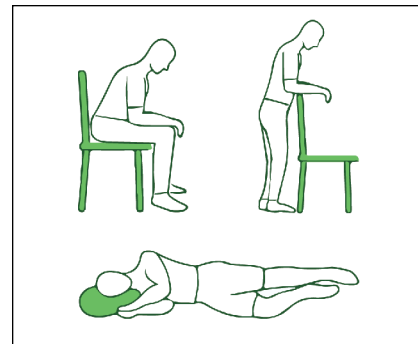
Breathlessness can occur for many reasons. It can make people feel scared, anxious or panicky and it may limit their activities.



The following ideas may help you feel less breathless. Try them out and use the ones that you find most helpful:

### Resting Positions

Use these 3 positions to help ease your breathlessness when you are resting or after you have just finished an activity. Try to relax your hands, wrists, shoulders, neck and jaw as much as possible. You can use any position that you find comfortable for breathing – you may wish to try changing positions.



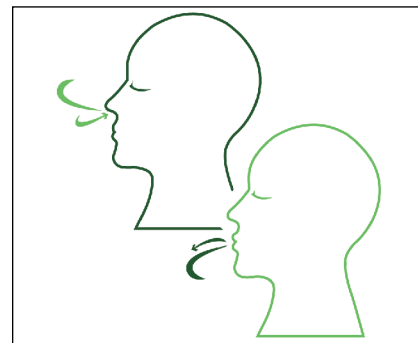
### Pursed Lip Breathing

**Step 1:** Breathe in gently through your nose

**Step 2:** Purse your lips as though you're going to blow out a candle and blow out through your pursed lips for as long as is comfortable. This helps empty all of the air out of your lungs. Repeat steps 1 & 2 three to five times.

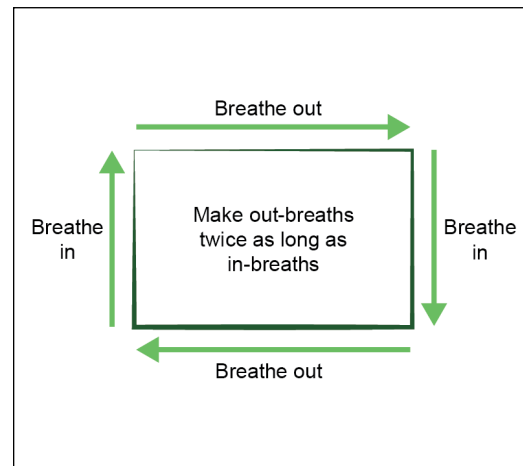
**Step 3:** Breathe normally for 1 minute.

You can use these 3 steps whenever you are feeling breathless.



## Breathe a Rectangle

Once you have found a comfortable position, look around for a rectangle. This might be a window, a door, picture or television screen. Now follow the sides of the rectangle, tracing them with your eyes, as you breathe - breathing in when you are tracing the short sides and breathing out when you are tracing the long sides. Gradually slow the speed at which your eyes move around the rectangle, pausing at the corners to help slow your breathing.



## Breath Control (tummy breathing)

When breathing you should see your tummy rise and fall as you breathe in and out. Learning how to control your breathing can help improve your breathlessness and strengthen your diaphragm muscle:

1. Sit comfortably with your back well supported.
2. Place a hand on your tummy just beneath your ribs – don't press too hard.
3. Keep your breathing steady and relaxed – do not take deep breaths.
4. Your hand should move forward as you breathe in, and back as you breathe out – this means that your diaphragm is working properly.

Try to do this for 3-4 times minutes, 3-4 times per day.

## Be kind to yourself

You should expect to have some days that are better than others. Your progress will likely not be consistent or predictable. Do not compare yourself to how you were yesterday, how you were before your illness, or to other people.



Remember that practicing diligent pacing strategies and staying within your energy envelope is an effective way of managing breathlessness.

For more information on how to support your understanding and management of symptoms as you recover from COVID-19, please visit [www.phsa.ca/health-info/post-covid-19-care-recovery](http://www.phsa.ca/health-info/post-covid-19-care-recovery)

