

# COPD: Helpful Breathing Techniques



Breathing is hard when you have chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). You may take quick, short breaths. Breathing this way makes it harder to get air into your lungs. But learning some ways to control your breathing may help. You may feel better and be able to do more.

There are three basic ways to control your breathing:

- Pursed-lip breathing
- Diaphragmatic breathing
- Breathing while bending

Use them when you are more short of breath than normal. Practice them as much as you can so you can do them well.

## Pursed-lip breathing

Pursed-lip breathing may help you breathe more air out so that your next breath can be deeper. It decreases shortness of breath and improves your ability to exercise. In this type

of breathing, you breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth while almost closing your lips. Breathe in for about 4 seconds, and breathe out for 6 to 8 seconds.

## Diaphragmatic breathing

Diaphragmatic breathing helps your lungs expand so that they take in more air. Many people with COPD find this breathing method helpful.

- Lie on your back or prop yourself up on several pillows. With one hand on your belly and the other on your chest, breathe in. Push your belly out as far as possible. You should be able to feel the hand on your belly move out, while the hand on your chest should not move.
- When you breathe out, you should be able to feel the hand on your belly move in.
- Once you can do diaphragmatic breathing well while you are lying down, you can learn to do it while sitting or standing.
- Practice diaphragmatic breathing for 20 minutes, 2 or 3 times a day.

## Breathing while bending forward

Breathing while bending forward at the waist may make it easier for you to breathe. It can reduce shortness of breath while you are exercising or resting. Bending forward may help with breathing because it helps the diaphragm to move more easily. The diaphragm is a large sheet of muscle that separates your lungs from your belly. It helps draw air into your lungs as you breathe.