Breathing Easier With COPD

You can make breathing with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) easier. You do this by helping the air flow in and out of your lungs. The following techniques help you avoid quick, small, shallow breaths. They help you take deeper breaths.

These techniques may not be right for all patients. Talk with your healthcare provider before doing these techniques to make sure they are right for you.

Breathing with your diaphragm

This technique is also called **belly breathing**. It helps you expand your lungs to take in more air. Try to breathe this way all the time. It helps make your diaphragm stronger. It may also make your breathing pattern better.

1. Lie down. Put a pillow under your head and another one under your knees.

2. Put a hand on your chest. Put the other hand on your stomach below your rib cage.

3. Breathe in through your nose while pushing your stomach out. The hand on your stomach should move up.

4. Breathe out slowly through pursed (almost closed) lips. Pull in your stomach muscles at the same time. The hand on your chest should not move. The hand on your stomach should move down.

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Pursed-lip breathing
This technique helps you clear air out of your lungs so your next breath can be deeper.

1. Purse your lips and breathe in through your nose.
2. Breathe out through your mouth.
3. Be sure you take at least twice as long to breathe out as you did to breathe in.

Breathing while bending forward at your waist
This technique helps you take air into your lungs by making your diaphragm move more easily. It may reduce shortness of breath when you exercise or rest. You may breathe like this when you are sitting or standing.

1. Bend forward a little at the waist. Keep your back straight.
2. If you are standing, hold on to the back of a sturdy chair or to the edge of a table.
3. Now breathe normally.

Clearing your lungs
The following techniques may help loosen mucus and clear your lungs. Too much mucus in your lungs may make it harder to breathe. It may also make it easier to get lung infections.

1. Controlled cough. Breathe in slowly through your nose, and fold your arms over your stomach. Cough 2 or 3 times as you exhale, and push on your stomach at the same time. Each cough should be short and sharp.
2. Postural drainage. Lie down in different positions to help drain mucus from your lungs.
3. Chest percussion. Tap lightly on your chest and back to help loosen mucus in your lungs. A care partner may be helpful in assisting.