

Handheld fan

Breathlessness Advice



The following information is to help you manage your breathlessness using a handheld fan. If your breathing is getting worse, changing or breathlessness is a new symptom then you should seek advice from your GP.

How does using a fan help

Research has shown that cooling the area of the face around the mouth, nose and cheeks can be effective at reducing the sensation of breathlessness. As well as a handheld fan the following may also help:

- A cool flannel or cool water mist spray to the face.
- Opening windows.
- Desktop or floor standing fans.

How to use the fan

Sit in a comfortable position that helps ease your breathlessness.

Hold the fan 15-20 cm (6-8inches) away from the face directed at the mouth and nose.

Slowly move the fan from side to side so you can feel the air moving across your nose, mouth and cheeks.

Fans with three blades produce a stronger airflow and seem to be more effective.

Use the fan until your breathlessness has eased. This time may vary from person to person and episode.

The fan can be used at the same time as oxygen therapy. People with face mask oxygen have reported that cooling the cheeks, neck and upper chest can help.

When to use the fan

Keep the fan handy, so you can use it whenever and wherever you feel breathless.
Use the fan as part of your recovery strategy along with positioning, to help recover faster.
Use the fan early, to help faster recovery from an acute episode.

How does it work?

Research has shown evidence of a significant improvement in breathlessness when the fan is directed at the face. It is thought to work by stimulating the nerves that supply the area around the nose and mouth and the information fed back to the brain reduces the sensation of breathlessness.

