

Breathlessness Support Service

Handheld fan

This information sheet helps you manage your long-term breathlessness. If your breathing is getting worse or you are experiencing breathlessness as a new feeling, it is important to seek medical advice from your GP.

Will using a fan help my breathlessness?

A cool draft of air from a handheld fan has been found to be very helpful in reducing the feeling of breathlessness.

You may find that the following can also help ease breathlessness:

- desktop or floor standing fans
- opening windows, for example in the car, to allow a cool draft of air to enter
- using a cool flannel or compress on your face.

How should I use the handheld fan?

- When you feel breathless adopt a comfortable position. You can discuss this with your physiotherapist or doctor for further advice.
- Hold your fan approximately six inches or 15cms from your face (or the distance you find most helpful).
- Aim the draft of air towards the central part of your face so that you feel the draught around the sides of your nose and above your top lip. You should feel the benefit within a few minutes.

Fans with three or more rotating blades seem to be most effective.

Is using a handheld fan safe?

You can use your fan for as long and as often as you wish as there are no known problems associated with using it. You may find it helpful to use your fan if you stop for a 'breather' whilst moving or walking, and for sudden breathlessness when you are still.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this information, please discuss these with either your BSS Physiotherapist or Occupational therapist during one of your home visits.

Acknowledgement

This document has been reproduced and adapted from the patient information leaflets used at Addenbrooke's Hospital as part of their Breathlessness Intervention Service with the permission of Dr Sara Booth, MD, FRCP (Macmillan Consultant in Palliative Medicine, Clinical Director Palliative Care and Associate Lecturer, University of Cambridge).