



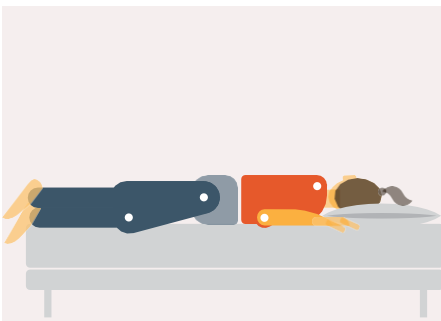
Managing breathlessness

It's common for people with Long COVID to experience breathlessness. Feeling breathless can be scary and cause feelings of anxiety or panic, which can make your breathing worse. Staying calm and learning the best way to manage your breathlessness will help.

It's normal to become more breathless when exerting yourself, such as walking up a flight of stairs, but it should recover to a level whereby you're not thinking about your breathing within a few minutes of rest. Your breathlessness should improve as you gradually recover or increase your activities, but in the meantime, the positions and techniques below can also help to manage it.

Positions to ease breathlessness

These are some positions that may reduce your breathlessness. Try each of them to see which one(s) help you. You can also try the breathing techniques described below while in any of these positions to help ease your breathing.



Lying prone

Lying flat on your stomach, or prone, can help breathlessness. It's not comfortable for everyone, but is a position to consider.



High side lying

Lying on your side propped up by pillows, supporting your head and neck, with your knees slightly bent.



Forward lean sitting

Sit at a table, lean forward from the waist with your head and neck resting on the pillow and your arms resting on the table. You can also try this without the pillows and rest your head on your hands.



Forward lean sitting (no table in front)

Sit on a chair, lean forward to rest your arms on your lap or the armrests of the chair.



Forward lean standing

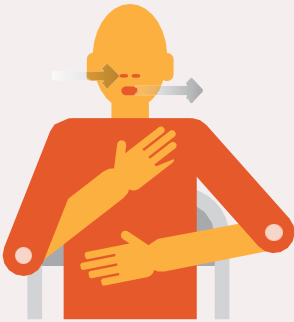
While standing, lean forward onto a windowsill or other stable surface.



Standing with back support

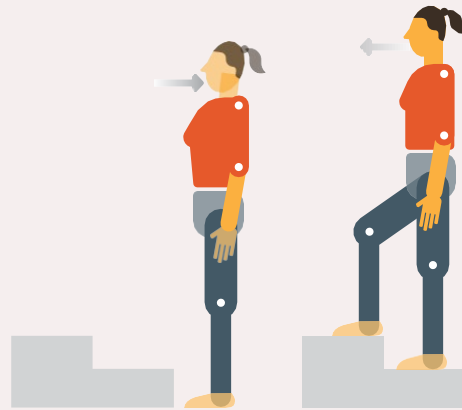
Lean with your back against a wall and your hands by your side. Have your feet about 30 cm away from the wall and slightly apart.

Breathing techniques



1. **Controlled breathing** This technique will help you to relax and control your breathing.

- Sit in a comfortable and supported position.
- Put one hand on your chest and the other on your stomach.
- Only if it helps you to relax, close your eyes (otherwise leave them open) and focus on your breathing.
- Slowly breathe in through your nose (or mouth if you're unable to do this) and then out through your mouth.
- As you breathe, you'll feel the hand on your stomach rise more than the hand on your chest.
- Try to use as little effort as possible and make your breaths slow, relaxed and smooth.



2. **Paced breathing**

This is useful to practise when carrying out activities that might take more effort or make you breathless, like climbing the stairs or walking up a hill. It's important to remember that there is no need to rush, and you can take rests.

- Think about breaking the activity down into smaller parts to make it easier to carry out without getting so tired or breathless at the end.
- Breathe in before you make the effort of the activity, such as before you climb up a step.
- Breathe out while making the effort, such as climbing up a step.
- You may find it helpful to breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.



“RED FLAGS” NEEDING URGENT ATTENTION:

If you start to feel severely short of breath or there is a change in how breathless you are at rest that doesn't improve with the positions or techniques described above, contact your health care provider or call 911.