

## Your Guide to Optimal Breathing during Movement and Exercise

### Understanding How Breathing Works

The WAY you breathe, how fast, how deep, and the rhythm, should match the body's needs both at rest and when we move. Breathing too quickly or inefficiently, for example, only using your upper chest, can lead to increased breathlessness, chest tightness, and fatigue. The rate, size and pattern of how we breathe will change according to whether we are resting or moving. At rest we should try to breathe around 8-14 breaths per minute, in and out through the nose.

During activity of higher intensity levels, breathing should initially get deeper and then gradually get faster, possibly up to 30 - 40 breaths per minute (breathing every 2 seconds). Some people are able to train themselves to continue to breathe through the nose. There are many advantages to doing this but it does take effort, and for most it is more natural (and OK) to mouth-breathe during activity.

For some people the anticipation of exercise can cause your breathing to increase before you even start, this may be due to several reasons including disease, de-conditioning or injury leading to a fear of getting breathless. It is good to be aware of this so that you avoid breathing too fast too soon.

*If you are breathing too fast at rest, you are more likely to over-breathe when you begin to move. (See 'Your Guide to Good Breathing.' leaflet)*

### Nose Breathing when you move

Breathing through your nose is generally more efficient. It helps warm, filter, and slow down your breath. Many people with Breathing Pattern Disorder (BPD) tend to mouth breathe, which can increase symptoms. See our **Guide to Nose Breathing** leaflet for more information.

**How to train yourself to nose breathe on movement:** Ensure you are able to nose breathe at rest-try taking 5 - 10 small quiet nose breaths before you start. Try keeping your mouth closed during walking, light movement or during your warm up. Gradually increase how long you can maintain nose breathing. Be patient. It may feel uncomfortable at first. If it is too difficult breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth as a steppingstone. Try to breathe a little slower and deeper using the lower part of your chest and avoid too much shoulder movement.

### Techniques for breathing on movement

- Blow as you go' which is breathing out on the effort or 'pursed lip breathing' which is breathing in through the nose and out through pursed lips can help with breathing control during movement.
- Focusing on the out breath and letting the in breath happen effortlessly can help to reduce the sensation of breathlessness.
- Occasionally try fully emptying your lungs to reset the breathing.
- Regulating breathing by timing breaths in and out to number of steps, i.e in for 2 steps out for 3 steps may help.
- Try to keep breathing rhythmical and even.

Finding a technique/pattern that suits your activity takes practice.

### Good Posture = Better Breathing

Posture should change and adapt to our environment and the activity we are doing. Maintaining good posture with relaxed shoulders helps your breathing muscles work more efficiently. Poor posture or body alignment (such as leaning too far forward when running or standing with a tilted pelvis) may result in stress on your leg and back muscles and over activity in your neck and chest muscles. This over compensation increases the effort of breathing which leads to more fatigue.

### Tips for During Exercise

Keep your body upright and aligned during movement to help your breathing stay relaxed. Avoid excessive shoulder movement, breathe with the lower ribs and belly.

### Recognise Your Triggers

Breathing can be affected by **physical factors** including heat, humidity, poor air quality and **emotional factors** such as stress, anxiety, or anticipation of exercise. Understanding your personal triggers will help you plan and manage your breathing more effectively during activity.

### Quick summary of breathing tips when you move

- Aim to maintain nose breathing for as long as you are able
- Focus on a slower controlled out-breath (use pursed lips if helpful)
- Try to keep the IN-breath as quiet and relaxed as possible
- Stand tall - good posture helps the diaphragm work
- Know your personal breathing triggers