

# Breathing Techniques for Obstructive Lung Disease

## Pursed-lip Breathing



© Allina Health System

**Pursed-lip breathing looks like you are blowing out a candle.**

Obstructive lung disease causes airways to collapse when you exhale and trap air in the air sacs of your lungs.

Think of this as an exercise to control your breathing.

It forces out the old air so you can take in new air that has fresh oxygen.

- When doing an activity, think about breathing through pursed lips during the hardest part of your activity.
- To do pursed-lip breathing:
  - Inhale (breathe in) through your nose with your mouth closed. (Breathe through your mouth if you are having trouble.)
  - Exhale (breathe out) through your mouth with your lips pursed (puckered). Blow out the air slowly.
  - Exhale twice as long as you inhale. For example, inhale to the count of 2 and exhale to the count of 4.

Pursed-lip breathing is used with all other breathing exercises. Practice it before doing other breathing techniques.

## Diaphragm Breathing

Obstructive lung disease causes your main breathing muscle (diaphragm) to flatten. This makes your upper chest muscles try to take over the breathing.

Diaphragm breathing will help to strengthen your diaphragm. Do this every day so it will become your normal breathing pattern.

To find your diaphragm, put your hand flat over the center of your stomach at the base of your breastbone and sniff. You will feel your diaphragm move. There are two types of diaphragm breathing:

### ■ front expansion

- Lie down on your back with your knees bent. Place one pillow under your head and one under your knees.
- Place one hand on your upper chest and your left hand over the center of your stomach at the base of your breastbone.
- Exhale slowly through pursed lips while drawing your stomach muscles in.
- Inhale slowly. Your stomach should expand out. Your hand over your diaphragm should feel this movement.

**(over)**

## ■ side expansion

- Sit in a comfortable position with good posture. Place your hands on your sides at the base of your ribs.
- Breathe out slowly through pursed lips. Your ribs should move in.
- Breathe in slowly and let your ribs expand out against your hands.

Practice combining each of these exercises. Be sure to rest after three to four deep breaths so you don't become lightheaded. You will need to master both pursed-lip and diaphragm breathing before going on to other exercises.