

Breathlessness Intervention Service

Leaflet 4: Positions to ease breathlessness

The information given below is designed to help you manage your stable long-term breathlessness. If you feel your breathing is getting worse, or you are experiencing breathlessness as a new feeling, it is important to seek advice from your GP.

When to use

These positions may help you to ease your breathlessness at rest, and after activity. The most commonly used positions are shown, however; you may find other positions of ease which are not pictured. Experiment with and modify different positions until you find what works best for you.

How positioning helps to ease breathlessness

The positions in this leaflet place the arms so the breathing accessory muscles are in a better position to help with breathing. Leaning forward may also improve the movement of your diaphragm, the main muscle of breathing. For more information on muscles of breathing see Leaflet 3.

Resting positions

The following positions may help if you are breathless at rest, or if you are feeling very tired or exhausted.



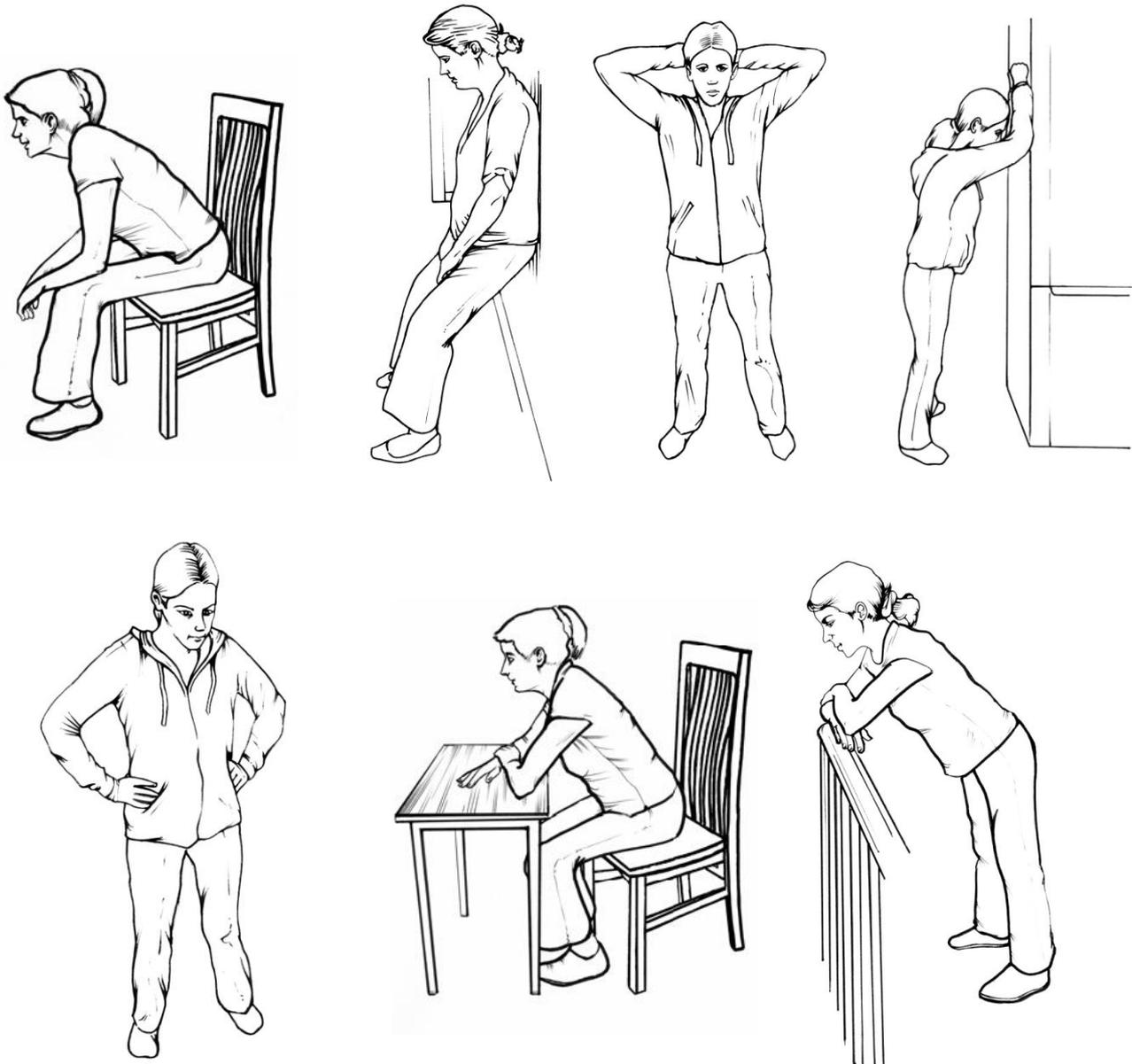
Make sure you are fully over on your side. Resting your upper arm on a pillow may also help.



Relax down onto the pillows as much as possible. Having your legs apart may also help.

Positions to ease breathlessness following activity

The following positions may help to ease breathlessness after you have been active. With all positions, try to relax the hands, wrists, shoulders, neck and jaw as much as possible. Experiment with your arm position. Does your breathing feel easier with your hands behind your head or back?

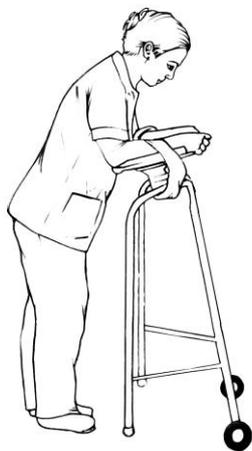


There is no one position which suits everyone, nor one position which people with a particular condition prefer. Experiment with different positions and find what works best for you.

Use of walking aids

Some people may notice that they are able to walk further and feel less breathless when pushing a supermarket trolley around the shop. Pushing the trolley enables you to maintain a 'forward lean position of ease' while walking.

In a similar way, using a walking frame may enable you to walk further and feel less breathless, as well as providing a portable leaning post when you wish to stop to rest. A walking stick can also provide a portable leaning post.



Gutter frame



Rotator frame



Walking stick

When walking outdoors, people often prefer to use a three- or four-wheeled walker. Some walkers have a seat so you can sit to rest, others may have a handy storage compartment.

Further information

For further help or advice contact the Breathlessness Intervention Service on 01223 274404 - 09:00 to 17:00 Monday to Friday, or see our website www.cuh.org.uk/bis



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Other formats:



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Document history

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