

Reducing breathlessness with hand-held fans

Why use a hand-held fan?

Many people find using a fan can help control breathlessness, and research has shown that a cool draft of air from a hand-held fan can be an effective method. Hand-held fans are a great option because they are inexpensive and easily portable. A free-standing fan, a desktop fan or the breeze through an open door or window may also help. Some people find that a cool washer or a mist of water on the face has a similar effect.

How to use a fan?

Follow the three steps below and you should start to feel benefits in a few minutes:

- 1 Hold the fan about 15cm from your face so you can feel it on your top lip.
- 2 Slowly move the fan side to side so that the breeze covers the bottom half of your face.
- 3 Remember to use your controlled breathing and relax your shoulders. To find out more about controlled breathing techniques talk to your health professional.

When to use a fan?

You can use your fan as often and for as long as you like. Keep it handy when at home and also take it with you when you go out. You may find it helpful to use your fan if you stop for a rest after doing an activity that makes you breathless, such as walking, climbing stairs or for sudden breathlessness when you are still.

Why do fans help?

It is unclear exactly why a fan can decrease breathlessness. It is likely that the fan's breeze stimulates the nerves in the face, **sending a message to your brain**, which decreases the feeling of breathlessness. The fan is also a good distraction. It can help decrease anxiety and give you a feeling of control.

Where to get a fan?

Lung Foundation Australia has sourced a fan that has been shown in studies to reduce symptoms such as breathlessness. These can be purchased via our online shop.

Content adapted with permission from Mary Roberts, Clinical Nurse Consultant, Breathlessness Clinic, Westmead Hospital.

Buy a fan



Lung Foundation Australia offers a range of services and resources to support people living with a lung disease.

lungfoundation.com.au/shop

1800 654 301

