

You can reach us at:

This information is also available at:  
[www.BristolHospice.com](http://www.BristolHospice.com)



## Shortness of Breath or Dyspnea Management

If these techniques below are unsuccessful, please call Bristol. **We want to help!**

The goal is that your loved one will achieve an acceptable level of shortness of breath.

This means:

1. Verbal shortness of breath scale at or below their acceptable level.
2. Loved ones who are not able to talk appear comfortable and calm. They can sleep and interact in their normal manner. Their breathing is relaxed.

### How to identify your loved one might be experiencing shortness of breath by statements you might hear:

- “My chest feels tight...”
- Air hunger or “I feel like can’t get enough air...”
- “I’m having difficulty breathing...”
- They are having trouble talking because they keep stopping every few words.

### How to identify your loved one has shortness of breath if they are not able to tell you of their shortness of breath:

- Coughing
- Gasping
- Rapid breathing, more than 20 respirations (breathing in and out) in a minute
- Shallow breathing
- Unusually tired
- Panting or loud breathing
- Belly breathing
- Stomach muscles tense while pushing breath out
- Longer time exhaling than inhaling
- Restlessness, agitation, anxiety, irritability, or confusion



## How to help your loved one if they are experiencing shortness of breath:

### 1. Non-medication:

- a. Breathing techniques
  - i. Pursed lip breathing (breathing through lips pursed like whistling)
  - ii. Rest periods during activities
- b. Repositioning
  - i. Changing positions in bed
  - ii. Changing from bed to chair or chair to bed
- c. Gentle massage – relaxation technique
- d. Pet therapy (if there is a pet in the home) – relaxation technique
- e. Meditation – relaxation technique
- f. Distraction techniques
  - i. Television
  - ii. Music
  - iii. Change of scenery

### 2. Medication related:

- a. Shortness of breath medications as ordered by physician
- b. Shortness of breath medications have possible side effects including but not limited to:
  - i. Some feeling of anxiousness or anxiety, this feeling does tend to dissipate
- c. Pain medications like opioids, such as Roxanol/"Morphine" that can be used to treat shortness of breath, can have side effects such as but not limited to:
  - i. Sleepiness
  - ii. Constipation
  - iii. Confusion
  - iv. Nausea
  - v. Slowed breathing
  - vi. Dizziness
- d. If the patient experiences side effects, please contact Bristol so we can help.

### 3. If these techniques are unsuccessful, please call Bristol and we want to help.

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
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