

Patient information

Step sets - managing air hunger

What is air hunger?

Air hunger is the sensation of needing to take more air in, either through bigger breaths or a quicker breathing rate. It is a normal breathing reflex but can become over-sensitive and contribute to your feelings of breathlessness.

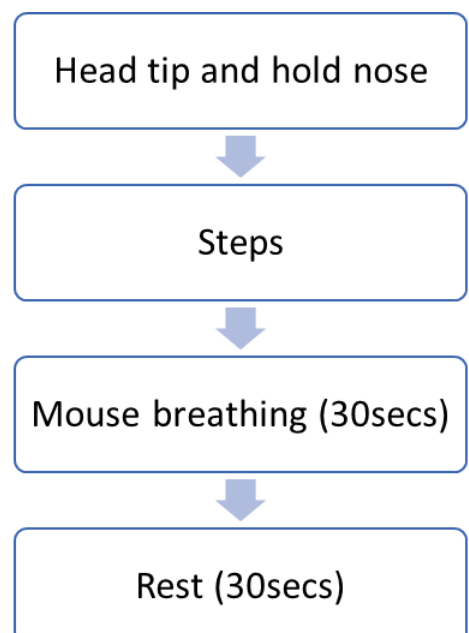
The aim of this technique is to help you breathe less and reduce your sensation of air hunger.

Mouse breathing

- Relax your shoulders and upper body
- Take small, quiet breaths through your nose
- Gradually try to slow your breathing rate
- Use your finger under your nose to feel your breath

Step sets

- Take a normal breath in and out (tip head backward then forward)
- Gently hold your nose after the out breath
- March / step whilst still holding your nose (10 steps is a good starting point)
- Stop stepping and return to mouse breathing through your nose for 30 seconds
- Rest for 30 seconds using 'stop, drop and flop' if necessary
- Repeat the following cycle 5 times in total
- Try to add one step with each cycle



Progressions

Adding 1 step to your starting number is a good guide (eg day 1 = 10, 11, 12, 13, 14; day 2 = 11, 12, 13, 14, 15), but it's important to progress at your own pace.

Maintain focus on achieving mouse breathing after each breath hold rather than the total number of steps you can manage. Try not to increase your steps by more than 10 each week (e.g. week 1 = 20, week 2 = 30 etc).

Once this feels more manageable, you can start to apply to more active exercise as guided by your physiotherapist.

Common mistakes

- Breath holding on your in breath rather than after your out breath
- Breathing holding for too long - make sure you can maintain mouse breathing after the steps
- Progressing too quickly - focus on quality over quantity
- Forgetting about good posture

Contacts details

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