

Managing your breathlessness using a handheld fan

This leaflet explains how to use a handheld fan to manage your breathlessness. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact your physiotherapist on 0207 188 5106 (Monday – Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm).

Your Physiotherapists name is:

Contents

How can a handheld fan help my breathlessness?	3
Are handheld fans safe?	3
How do I use the handheld fan to help manage my breathlessness?	3
How long will I be using my hand held fan for?	4
How do I know if using the handheld fan has helped my breathlessness?	4
Borg Breathlessness Scale	5
Notes	6
Contact us	7

How can a handheld fan help my breathlessness?

Research studies have shown that a cool draft of air from a handheld fan can be very helpful in reducing the feeling of breathlessness. You may also find that desktop or floor standing fans, opening windows or a cool flannel compressed against your face can also help to ease your breathlessness.

Are handheld fans safe?

There are no known problems associated with using a handheld fan if used correctly. Please ensure you keep the fan blades away from your face and fingers.

How do I use the handheld fan to help manage my breathlessness?

When you feel breathless try the following:

- Get into a comfortable position such as sitting in a chair with your back supported, leaning forward whilst sitting or leaning on a work surface when standing. Speak to your physiotherapist about other positions that may be helpful.
- Hold your fan approximately six inches or 15 cm from your face.
- Aim the draft of air towards the central part of your face so that you feel the draught around the sides of your nose and above your top lip.

You should feel the benefit within a few minutes.

You may find it helpful to use your fan if you stop for a 'breather' after doing an activity that makes you breathless, such as walking, climbing stairs or for sudden breathlessness when you are still.

Please note that our supply of hand held fans are battery operated. It is your responsibility to replace the batteries when they run out.

How long will I be using my hand held fan for?

You will be given a handheld fan for a trial period of six weeks. After this time, you will need to return it. If you have found the fan has helped you to manage your breathlessness you will be advised by your physiotherapist about places you can purchase your own fan.

How do I know if using the handheld fan has helped my breathlessness?

We suggest that you use the breathlessness scale below and the diaries provided to help monitor your breathless. We will then aim to review how you have been doing at your next clinic appointment.

Please note that as well as using your fan you should continue to use the techniques and/or breathing exercises taught by your physiotherapist to manage your breathlessness effectively.

Borg Breathlessness Scale:

Please use the breathlessness scale below to help with monitoring your breathlessness and also when filling out the breathlessness diaries provided.

This scale is a way for you to score how you feel your breathlessness is at a given time; such as when you have climbed up some stairs. Your physiotherapist will be able to answer any questions you may have about using the scale when issuing your handheld fan.

0	Nothing at all
0.5	Very, very slight
1	Very slight
2	Slight
3	Moderate
4	Somewhat severe
5	Severe
6	
7	Very severe
8	
9	Very, very severe
10	Maximal

Contact us

If you have any questions concerns about how to use your handheld fan, please contact your physiotherapist on **020 7188 5106** (Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4.30pm).

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets.

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints)

e: complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language support services – If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

t: 020 7188 8815 **e:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.
t: 111

NHS Choices – Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.
w: www.nhs.uk

Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust

Members of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, and to become a member:

t: 0800 731 0319 **e:** members@gstt.nhs.uk
w: www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership

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