



Feeling short of breath is a common symptom of COVID-19 during an infection. Sometimes this sensation can last longer than the original infection.

Shortness of breath (also called breathlessness or dyspnea) can interfere with your daily activities, and also cause fear and panic. If your breathlessness is not severe, and your provider has determined there is no other cause requiring treatment, there are several actions you can take to address these symptoms. Below is information on symptoms of breathlessness, ways to improve your symptoms, and when to seek care.

## What does shortness of breath feel like?

- Feeling like you are not getting enough air.
- Feeling winded or out of breath.
- Feeling like your upper body and muscles are working harder than normal to breathe.
- Feeling like you may need to stop frequently during activity allow your breathing to normalize.

## What can I do to help my breathing?

- Be patient and kind to yourself.
- Allow for small frequent rest periods during an activity.
- Consider getting a pulse oximeter to monitor your oxygen levels and provide reassurance.
- Break large tasks into smaller ones.
- Ask for help and delegate when you can.
- Start with small gradual exercise and slowly increase as tolerated
- Practice the following breathing techniques:
  - **Belly Breathing:** view a demonstration at: <https://youtu.be/wai-GIYGMeo>

- **Pursed Lip Breathing:** view a demonstration at:  
<https://youtu.be/7kpJ0QRss4>
- **Boxed Breathing:** view a video demonstration at:  
<https://youtu.be/tEmt1Znux58>

### **When should I see medical care?**

**Go to the emergency room** or call the local emergency number (such as 911) if your breathing difficulty comes on suddenly or if it seriously interferes with your ability to breathe and even talk.

You should also call 911 if someone completely stops breathing.

**See your health care provider** if any of the following occur along with breathing difficulties:

- Chest discomfort, pain, or pressure
- Wheezing.
- Tightness in the throat or a barking, croupy cough.
- Shortness of breath after only slight activity or while at rest.
- Shortness of breath that wakes you up at night or requires you to sleep propped up to breathe.
- Shortness of breath with simple talking.
- You have breathed in or choked on an object (foreign object aspiration or ingestion).

To learn more about how COVID-19 affects the lungs visit:

<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/coronavirus/lungs>

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