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PatientInformation

Breathing



The condition

The process of breathing

About the condition

Breathing is an automatic process governed by the brain. The brain activates the diaphragm and costal (rib) muscles to open up the rib cage and it expands in three directions. Negative pressure within the pleural cavity (rib cage) causes the air to be sucked in. Relaxation of the same muscles results in a recoil, which expels the air.

Symptoms can include

- Upper lung breathing verses the diaphragmatic pattern
- Feeling of tension
- Lethargy on waking/
Heavy headed in the morning
- Blurred vision
- Dizzy spells
- Chest pain/tight feeling in the chest
- Shortness of breath/air hunger
- Sighing/yawning a lot
- Bloating feeling in the stomach
- Tingling in the fingers
- Unable to get a breath
- Stiff fingers or arms
- Tight feelings around the mouth/throat
- Cold hands or feet
- Palpitations
- Feeling of anxiety/Panic Attacks

The purpose of breathing is to oxygenate your blood so it can be pumped around your body by your heart. It is also used to rid the body of carbon dioxide from blood already sent around the body. The interchange between blood and the gases occur in alveoli (air sacs).

What we can do to help

- Breathing re-education: explanation of breathing patterns- what is normal and how you can achieve this.
- Discussion on relaxation techniques – developing an improved awareness of our bodies reaction to stress and how to manage the muscle tension that results
- Usually the first session is up to 1 hour followed by 1 to 3 sessions of follow up visits over the next few months to monitor progress and advise as necessary
- Breathing patterns take 3 to 4 months to change with regular exercise to get the best result

Over breathing leads to excessive loss of carbon dioxide and under breathing or breath holding causes a build up of carbon dioxide. Prolonged variation to our normal breathing pattern alters the delicate carbon dioxide/oxygen balance in our blood and can result in a variety of symptoms.

What you can do to help

There are several books available from the public library or are on sale in reception. These give clear explanations and practical advice.

We suggest you read

- “Breathe To Succeed “
by Tania Clifton-Smith
- “The Hyper-Ventilation Syndrome”
by Dinah Bradley-Morrison

Your local Active Physio:



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