



Practice pursed lip breathing

The act of pursed lip breathing, i.e., exhaling slowly against pursed lips as in the act of whistling (*Figure 2*), is useful to your breathing efficiency in many ways.⁷ Pursed lip breathing teaches you to breathe in a deeper, slower fashion. In addition, it helps you to empty your lungs more completely. This is particularly important in emphysema/COPD, where over-inflation of the lungs is a problem.

Some patients like to find out how long their oxygen saturation remains above 90% when their oxygen is turned off. It gives them a feeling of confidence when their oxygen flow is stopped for a short period. Pursed lip breathing may elevate the oxygen saturation significantly, i.e., into the 90s, based on breathing room air, which might initially give you readings in the 80s or even lower.*

After you master pursed lip breathing, try doing this with exercise. Use your oximeter as you walk around the house and later outside and around the block. Try to walk at least 100 yards using pursed lip breathing. Use of a pedometer is helpful here. You will probably find out that pursed lip breathing will relieve your shortness of breath as well as improve your oxygen saturation, both at rest and during exercise. This is an important observation.

*Check with your physician before trying this on your own.

Tip

When practicing pursed lip breathing, take a full breath, shape your mouth as though you are whistling, and breathe out slowly to resist the speed of the air leaving your lungs.

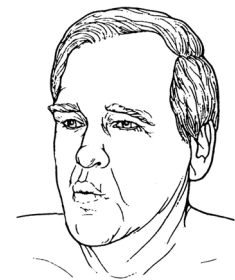


Figure 2

Reduce shortness of breath

Overinflation of the lungs puts the breathing muscles at a mechanical disadvantage, adding increased load to the breathing. This is often interpreted as an increased effort to breathe or "dyspnea," which is an unpleasant sensation of breathing. Often patients can reduce their shortness of breath by slow, deep breathing and exhaling (*Figures 3 and 4*). Practice using your oximeter with pursed lip breathing, using two or three seconds to breathe in, and four, five or six seconds to exhale. Find a comfortable breathing rate and pattern and watch your oxygen saturation increase at a given oxygen setting. **With your doctor's approval**, you might also be interested in trying this while breathing room air. Your oxygen saturation while breathing room air will be achieved by stopping your oxygen for 10 to 20 minutes. It takes this long to use up the residual oxygen in your lungs (the amount of air left after you exhale).**

**Please be sure to check with your doctor before trying this without your oxygen.

Tip

Inhale, 1, 2, 3,
Exhale, 4, 5, 6

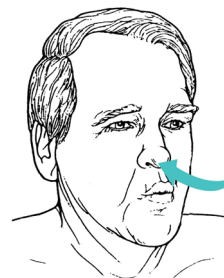


Figure 3

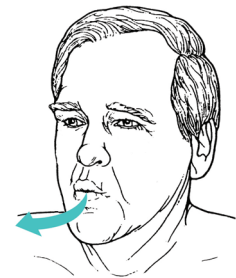


Figure 4