

MANAGING SHORTNESS OF BREATH

What is shortness of breath?

- A feeling of not being able to catch your breath
- A feeling of “not being able to get enough air”
- Having trouble breathing
- A not pleasant feeling of being very aware of how you are breathing

When you should call your Hospice Alliance nurse?

- When you are unable to do the things you want to do
- If your or your loved one’s breathing scares you
- If your breathing trouble makes you feel restless or “jumpy”
- If you see a bluish coloring to your lips fingers or toes

What can be done about your shortness of breath?

The good news is there is a lot you can do for shortness of breath.

Your Hospice team will discuss with you ways to help you feel better.

Things that may be helpful:

- Sit quietly in a chair
- Raise your head on pillows
- Raise the head of your bed when lying in bed
- Sit with your hands on your knees leaning over the bedside table
- Take slow, deep breaths, breathing in through your nose and then breathe out slowly and gently through pursed lips (lips that are “puckered” as if you were going to whistle) – this is called pursed lip breathing
- Use a fan or open a window to increase air movement in the room
- Apply a cool cloth to your head, neck or along your jaw line
- Put your oxygen on if you have it available in your home
- Take the medicines you have for shortness of breath
- Use relaxing activities such as prayer or calming music
- Try to keep your room quiet and peaceful
- Notify your hospice team if your shortness of breath does not get better or you feel it is getting worse

If you have any questions, please call us at 262-652-4400