

How can I help myself?

Become aware of the way you breathe...

and how it may vary in certain situations. By learning to control the rate and depth of your breathing, i.e. retraining:

- Learn to nose breathe.
- Try to stop yawning and sighing.
- Focus your breathing gently into your abdomen, avoiding excessive upper chest movement.
- Become aware of your posture and learn to recognise areas of tension in your body.

A physiotherapist can guide you through these stages to break the cycle of symptoms and reduce the associated anxiety. Changing a habit takes a lot of practise and can take months to achieve. It is important to look at all aspects of lifestyle that may be contributing to your overbreathing.

Exercise...

This can be a good way of increasing your general feeling of well-being and self-confidence. If exercising is particularly difficult, discuss this with your physiotherapist.

Diet...

Variations in your blood sugar levels can contribute to your symptoms, so:

- Avoid large meals, particularly late at night.
- Eat regularly
- Take healthy snacks between meals

Please visit www.physiohypervent.org for more info and to find a physiotherapist who treats HVS.

Recommended reading:

Hyperventilation Syndrome by Dinah Bradley ISBN 978-1856267502

Recommended breathing retraining

- 1** Lie comfortably on your back with a pillow under your head and knees. Place one hand on your stomach, with the other hand relaxed by your side.
- 2** Gently close your mouth, lips together and keep your jaw loose.
- 3** Breathe in gently through your nose, feeling your tummy rise and expand 'like a balloon' as you breathe in. The breath should be unforced and silent.
- 4** Breathe out lightly through your nose if possible, without pushing, keeping your stomach relaxed.
- 5** Make sure you relax and pause at the end of each breath out.
- 6** When you breathe in, your upper chest should be relaxed and not moving. From time to time place your hand on your upper chest to check this.
- 7** As you repeat this sequence be aware of any areas of tension in your body and concentrate on 'letting go', particularly jaw, neck, shoulders and hands.

You need to practise as often as you can. Try little and often, e.g. three minutes every hour. Progress to practising whilst sitting, then standing and finally walking.

As your body adapts to this way of breathing, you will find it requires less time and energy and is more relaxing. Remember, the more time put into practising, the sooner you will feel back in control.

If you are struggling with this, a Chartered Physiotherapist may be able to help – more details on our website at www.physiohypervent.org.



PHYSIOTHERAPY FOR
HYPERVENTILATION

HYPERVENTILATION
ALSO CALLED OVER-BREATHING

WHAT IS IT?

WHAT IS OVER-BREATHING?

Exactly as it sounds, over-breathing is breathing more than is necessary to meet the body's natural requirements.

Over-breathing is a perfectly normal reaction to any stressful situation. Generally, when this has passed, breathing will return to a normal rate. Sometimes as a result of prolonged stress or a physical trigger, a continual pattern of over-breathing can occur whereby the breathing pattern does not return to a normal level.

How do I know if I am over-breathing?

You may not be aware that your breathing is wrong or you may be aware of some, or even all, of the following most commonly experienced symptoms:

- Frequent sighing and yawning
- Feeling breathless, even after relatively minor exercise
- Difficulty co-ordinating breathing and talking and/or eating
- Breathless when anxious or upset
- Pins and needles in hands/arms/around mouth
- Palpitations
- Feeling permanently exhausted and unable to concentrate for no apparent reason
- Throat symptoms
- Muscular aches and tension around the neck/shoulders/jaw
- Bloating feeling in the stomach
- Light headedness

What causes these symptoms?

When we over-breathe we eliminate large quantities of carbon dioxide on every out breath.

This causes a chemical imbalance affecting many of the body's systems. The results can be extremely unpleasant and frightening, causing us to become anxious. This can further upset our breathing pattern and a vicious circle develops.



Triggers

You may be well aware of a particular event or experience that triggers your over-breathing, although this is not always the case. Possible triggers include bereavement, anxieties at work or home, altered breathing due to chest disease, (e.g. asthma) or following surgery.