

Specialist palliative care team

Hand-held fans for breathlessness

Information for patients, relatives and carers

Introduction

The Imperial Health Charity has generously provided us with a supply of electric hand-held fans for our breathless patients.

The information given below will help you manage your breathlessness using a hand-held fan.

Will using a fan help my breathlessness?

When you're feeling breathless you might go to an open door or window to 'get some fresh air'. In a similar way, a cool draught of air from a hand-held fan can reduce your feeling of breathlessness. This means you can use the fan as a 'portable breath of fresh air'.

The following may also help with breathlessness:

- A cool flannel or cool water mist spray to the face
- Opening windows, for example in a car
- Desktop or floor standing fans

How does cooling your face help with breathlessness?

Research has shown that cooling your face with a fan is effective at reducing breathlessness. It is thought that cooling your cheeks, nose and mouth areas sends a message to the brain which reduces the feeling of breathlessness.

How should I use the hand-held fan?

1. Move to a comfortable position that eases your breathlessness.
2. Hold the fan about 15 centimetres or six inches away from your face.

3. Aim the air towards your face and move the fan slowly side to side, so the draught covers the nose, mouth and sides of the cheeks.

4. Use it until you feel your breathing ease.

Some people have to use the fan for just a minute, others for 10 minutes, before they feel their breathlessness ease. More powerful fans can be more effective.

The fan can be used at the same time as nasal oxygen. People using face mask oxygen have commented that cooling the cheeks, neck and upper chest with the fan helps with their breathing.

When should I use the fan?

You can use the fan whenever you feel breathless. Keep the fan in your pocket when you're out and about so you have it when you need it. Keep a hand-held fan by your bedside so it is in easy reach if you wake at night.

You may find it helpful to use the fan with other breathlessness management techniques such as moving to a more upright position, breathing techniques, relaxation and mindfulness.

How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3312 7777** (10.00 – 16.00, Monday to Friday). You can also email PALS at imperial.pals@nhs.net The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street
London W2 1NY

Email: ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team: imperial.communications@nhs.net

Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: www.imperial.nhs.uk