

# Hand Therapy Relaxation Techniques – Breathing

This leaflet explains more about breathing relaxation techniques and how to use them to help with pain and discomfort. Your therapist will let you know which exercise may help.

If you have any further questions, please speak to your hand therapist.

## 1. Relaxation breathing

### What is relaxation breathing?

You can use the relaxation breathing technique to help you to relax and feel calm.

Relaxation breathing can also reduce levels of pain, anxiety or stress, which may be caused by injury, pain or a chronic condition.

### How do I prepare for relaxation breathing?

Sit in a comfortable chair in a quiet space, free from distractions.

To gain the most from this exercise, make sure you have enough time and don't feel rushed.

### How do I do the relaxation breathing exercise?

Sit with your back straight and place the tip of your tongue against the ridge of tissue just behind your upper front teeth. Try to keep your tongue in this position through the whole exercise.

1. Exhale (breathe out) completely through your mouth, making a 'whoosh' sound. If this is difficult, purse your lips whilst exhaling.
2. Close your mouth and inhale (breathe in) quietly through your nose for a count of four (4).
3. Hold your breath for a count of seven (7).
4. Exhale completely through your mouth, making a 'whoosh' sound for a count of eight (8).
5. Repeat steps two – four three more times for a total of four breaths.

Always inhale quietly through your nose and exhale audibly through your mouth, and make sure you exhale for twice as long as you inhale.

Keep the tip of your tongue in the position described for the whole time.

If you have trouble holding your breath, you can count quicker per breath - make sure you keep the ratio of inhaling for four counts, holding your breath for seven counts and exhaling for eight counts (4:7:8).

Slow down your rate of breathing as you start to find the exercise easier.

Aim to do this exercise at least once a day. Try to spend five to ten minutes working through the sequence as many times as you can.

## 2. Deep breathing

### What is deep breathing?

You can also use the deep breathing technique to help you relax and feel calm.

In deep breathing exercises you breathe deeply from your abdomen (stomach), rather than taking shallow breaths from your upper chest.

This means you get as much fresh air into your lungs as possible and inhale more oxygen. The more oxygen your body gets, the less short of breath, tense and anxious you feel.

### How do I prepare for deep breathing?

Sit in a comfortable chair in a quiet space, free from distractions.

To gain the most from this exercise, make sure you have enough time and don't feel rushed.

### How do I do the deep breathing exercise?

Sit comfortably with your back supported. Put one hand on your chest and the other on your stomach.

1. Breathe in through your nose. The hand on your stomach should rise. The hand on your chest should move very little.
2. Exhale through your mouth, pushing out as much air as you can while contracting your abdominal muscles. The hand on your stomach should move in as you exhale, but your other hand should move very little.
3. Continue to breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Try to inhale enough so that your lower abdomen rises and falls. Count slowly as you exhale.

If it is hard breathing from your abdomen while sitting up, try doing the exercise lying on the floor. You could try putting a small book on your stomach, and trying to breathe so the book rises as you inhale and falls as you exhale.

Aim to do this exercise at least once a day for ten to fifteen minutes.

### Useful sources of information

[www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/reduce-stress.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/reduce-stress.aspx)

### Contact us

If you have any questions regarding relaxation breathing techniques and hand therapy, please feel free to discuss them with your therapist at your next appointment.

For more urgent queries please contact treatment enquiries on 020 8725 1038 (answer phone only, please leave a message and someone will get back to you as soon as possible).

For appointment enquiries, please contact 020 8725 3000.

**Your therapist's name is:** \_\_\_\_\_

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.stgeorges.nhs.uk](http://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk)

## Additional services

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

**Tel:** 020 8725 2453 **Email:** [pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk)

### NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

**Web:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

**Tel:** 111

### AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all of our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website ([www.accessable.co.uk](http://www.accessable.co.uk)). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



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