



Shortness of breath

You came to the emergency department because you were short of breath. The doctor examined you and did tests, and it is safe for you to go home. This sheet explains how to look after yourself and when to come back.

What is it?

Shortness of breath means feeling that you cannot get enough air. It has many causes, such as asthma, a chest infection, a lung condition, a heart problem, or anxiety. The doctor will have told you the likely cause today. Sometimes the cause is not found straight away, and more tests are arranged later.

Looking after yourself at home

- Sit upright or lean forward with your arms resting on a table if you feel breathless.
- Breathe slowly in through your nose and out through pursed lips.
- Rest, and increase your activity slowly as you feel better.
- Do not smoke, and stay away from smoke and dust.
- Keep a list of your medicines and diagnosis with you.

Medicines

- Use your inhalers or other medicines exactly as prescribed. Follow the packet or your doctor's instructions.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist to check how you use your inhaler; a spacer can help.
- Do not stop any of your usual medicines unless your doctor told you to.

Follow-up

- See your family doctor or health centre within 2 to 3 days, or as advised.
- Keep any appointments or tests arranged for you today.

Come back to the emergency department or call an ambulance straight away if:

- Sudden or severe difficulty breathing
- Breathlessness with chest pain or blue lips
- Being unable to speak in full sentences
- Breathing that keeps getting worse even at rest
- Coughing up blood
- Fainting, new confusion, or being very drowsy



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This leaflet is general information to support the advice your doctor or nurse gave you today. It does not replace their advice. If you are worried, seek medical help.

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