S.O.S. in an attack of shortness of breath

Experiencing an acute attack of shortness of breath can be frightening for people with COPD. Learning to stay calm during an attack can get your breathing – and anxiety – back under control.

**What do you do when you experience an acute attack of shortness of breath?**

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**Goal:**
- To bring your breathing back to normal during an acute attack of shortness of breath.

**Benefits:**
1. Learn how to control shortness of breath.
2. Help reduce the panic associated with an attack.

**Points to remember:**
- Give yourself the space and time to get your breathing back to normal.
Steps

1. Stop and find a comfortable position.
2. Stay as calm as possible.
3. Lean your head slightly forward.
4. Relax your shoulders.
5. Inhale through your mouth.
6. Exhale through your mouth.
7. Inhale and exhale as fast as needed.
8. Start to exhale slowly without forcing the exhalation. At this point, introduce pursed-lip breathing.
9. Slow your breathing.
10. Start to inhale through your nose.
11. Continue to pursed-lip breathe for at least 5 minutes.

Do you think your friends and family can help you when you are experiencing an attack of shortness of breath?

Consider how they can help you.
Suggestions for friends and family

Watching someone going through an attack of shortness of breath can be upsetting and frightening.

Be prepared. Let the people close to you know what to do if you find yourself short of breath.

Ask your friends or family members to:

• Talk to you slowly, be supportive and provide reassurance.
• Help you to concentrate on your breathing.
• Remind you to take a position to reduce shortness of breath. This can help you breathe easier.
• Help you to take your rescue medication as prescribed in your Plan of Action.
• Monitor your symptoms closely.
• Call for help and ask questions from the contacts identified in the Plan of Action.
• Help you find a way to get to the hospital.