

Patient information factsheet

Physiotherapy for breathing pattern disorders

We have given you this factsheet because you have an appointment with our respiratory physiotherapy team to help you improve your breathing technique. It explains what breathing pattern disorders (BPD) are, the signs and symptoms to look out for and how physiotherapy can help retrain your breathing. We hope it will help to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a member of your healthcare team.

What are breathing pattern disorders?

Breathing pattern disorders (BPD) are patterns of abnormal breathing, where the depth and rate of breath are more than the body needs.

There are different types of BPD, including:

- hyperventilation syndrome (breathing too quickly)
- dysfunctional breathing patterns

Breathing differently or breathing at a faster rate is usual for short periods of time when you are excited, stressed or unwell. However, when your breathing doesn't return to normal, long-term changes in your body may occur. These changes lead to the main symptoms of BPD.

What causes BPD?

BPD are caused by a variety of factors. Most people with BPD have an underlying diagnosis of asthma, COPD or another respiratory condition. However, stressful life events, bereavement, anxiety, surgery or other medical conditions can also trigger BPD.

What are the symptoms of BPD?

Everyone will experience different symptoms. However, the most common symptoms include:

- cold fingers or hands
- shortness of breath
- dry mouth
- palpitations
- difficulty taking a deep breath
- dizziness
- tight feelings in your throat or chest
- fatigue (extreme tiredness)
- anxiety

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How can physiotherapy help?

We can give you expert advice on your BPD and ways to manage your symptoms. We can offer breathing education to help you re-learn a more effective way of breathing. We can also refer you on to psychological services if you need more support with underlying mental health issues.

What will happen at my appointment?

Your first session will usually last around 45 minutes. We will ask lots of questions about your symptoms and other aspects of your life. We will also carry out a thorough assessment of your breathing style and pattern.

We will offer practical advice and information about the triggers for your BPD and provide exercises to return your breathing to a more natural rate and depth. You may feel some discomfort at first as your body adapts. However, this will improve as you continue to practice on a regular basis.

Putting you back in control of your breathing

We aim to empower you with the tools you need to put you back in control of your breathing and day-to-day activities.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.

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The Respiratory Centre
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Useful links

www.blf.org.uk

www.uhs.nhs.uk/Media/Controlleddocuments/Patientinformation/Respiratory/Breathing-pattern-disorders-patient-information.pdf

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