



Breathing space: Being mindful of your breath - an easy five minute practice

When you are dealing with challenging situations, you can tense up and your breathing can become more difficult. Breathlessness might also be a side effect of treatments you are going through. Learning simple breathing techniques can help enhance your breathing capacity, ease stress and fatigue and give you more confidence. In addition, the use of some well-known acupressure points can further ease symptoms such as coughing and breathlessness.

A short breathing practice

Getting comfortable:

Most people find it helpful to sit quietly before practising these exercises. As you sit quietly and relax, your breath has time to settle and steady.

- sit upright, resting your arms on your lap or on the chair
- let the chair take your weight. Feel your lower body supported
- let your feet be supported by the floor
- feel your spine long with your head lightly balanced on top
- close your eyes or look downwards, keeping the back of your neck long

When you are ready:

Start to lengthen the out breath. Keep it gentle and easy. Don't try too hard. Remember the lungs are huge and absorb the air you take in. Feel the out breath, gently releasing tension:

- try a count of 3 in, pause, 4 out, pause
- as you breathe in, feel your back expand and your ribs open sideways under your arms. Pause briefly
- as you breathe out, feel your back and ribs soften, and relax. Pause briefly
- if it is comfortable, lengthen the count
- repeat this for 12 breaths then rest. Practise regularly or when you feel able

With confidence and time your breath will settle and lengthen.

Using some key acupressure points to help ease your breathing

In traditional Chinese medicine, specific points relate to other areas and functions of your body. These are called acupressure points.

Try including a couple of acupressure points that are well known to support the breathing and ease symptoms such as coughing and breathlessness. See the diagram overleaf.

Getting started:

Sitting with your upper body comfortably upright and relaxed can help the out breath:

- feel the space and width across the front of your chest from the tip of one shoulder to the other
- let your upper back be soft, shoulders dropping away from your neck, feel your shoulder blades sliding down your back – this helps keep the upper back area open and free
- keeping this openness across the chest, place your hands, palms up, on your lap

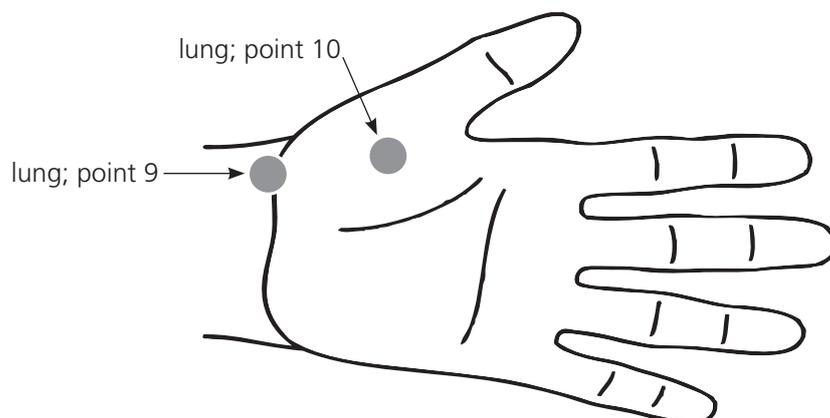
(continued overleaf)

Exercise 1:

- gently let your thumb sink into the centre of the thumb pad of the opposite hand – see diagram below, lung; point 10
Holding this point helps lung problems, cough and shortness of breath
- feel the rise and fall of your breath and imagine sending energy into this point
- hold for 1-2 minutes then swap sides and repeat

Exercise 2:

- sitting as before, let your thumb slide up to the wrist crease of the opposite hand
Gently let your thumb sink into the space just below the pad of the thumb – see diagram below, lung; point 9
Holding this point helps shallow breathing, coughing and swollen throat and is calming
- feel the rise and fall of your breath and imagine sending energy into this point
- swap sides and repeat



Other help and support

People who have cancer often say that during their illness they experience a range of emotions. Many find it to be a stressful, anxious and confusing time.

If you would like further information about any aspect of cancer and its treatments, including the supportive services offered at the LJMC, please drop in to the centre or call the Helpline.

The staff at the LJMC work as part of the overall team caring for you and include healthcare professionals and trained volunteers. The centre provides a relaxed setting in which to talk and ask questions.

The LJMC is situated between the main Cancer Centre building and Gate 3 (White Hill).

 **Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre**
... supporting people affected by cancer...

Services offered at the LJMC include:

- ① Drop-in centre
- ① Telephone helpline
- ① Benefits advice*
- ① Complementary therapies*
- ① Relaxation classes
- ① Counselling*
- ① Look Good Feel Better™ beauty workshops
- ① Headwear workshops
- ① Self-help courses

* These services are only available to NHS patients under the care of an oncologist based at Mount Vernon Cancer Centre

Mon-Fri: **9.30am–4.30pm**

Telephone Helpline: **020 3826 2555**

Website: **www.ljmc.org**