

## Shortness of Breath

**Note:** My NM Care corner is not intended to replace clinical care or management by a healthcare provider. If you have a medical emergency, please contact your healthcare provider.

Some people with cancer experience shortness of breath. You may also hear this referred to as dyspnea. When you are short of breath, you may feel:

- Breathless
- Wheezy
- Discomfort when breathing
- Like you can't get in enough air when you inhale
- Like your heart is beating faster
- Light-headed or dizzy

**Note:** It's important to let your doctor know if you are experiencing shortness of breath.

Shortness of breath may be caused by your cancer or cancer treatments.

An important step in managing dyspnea is discovering and treating the root cause. Once the cause is better understood, you and your health care team can discuss which self-care strategies and treatments are right for you.

### Self-care Strategies

- Keep the air in your home as free as possible from smoke, dust, pet hair, and dander.
- Use a humidifier.
- Cool air can help. Use your thermostat to lower the temperature in your room, and/or sit in front of a fan.
- Sit upright and, when lying down, use pillows to keep your head raised.
- Get a sense of open space by looking outside the window or walking into an empty room.
- Use meditation or mindful breathing to help stay calm when you feel short of breath. Practice breathing in this way: Inhale deeply through your nose, then exhale through pursed lips for twice as long as it took to inhale.
- Distract yourself from uncomfortable feelings by doing activities you enjoy and find calming, such as knitting, reading, or listening to music.

### How Your Care Team can Help

- You can talk with your health care team about medications that may help, like anti-anxiety medications or medications for breathing.
- If your shortness of breath is significant, your care team may recommend oxygen therapy.
- If your shortness of breath doesn't get better and involves chest pain, seek medical care immediately.

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_