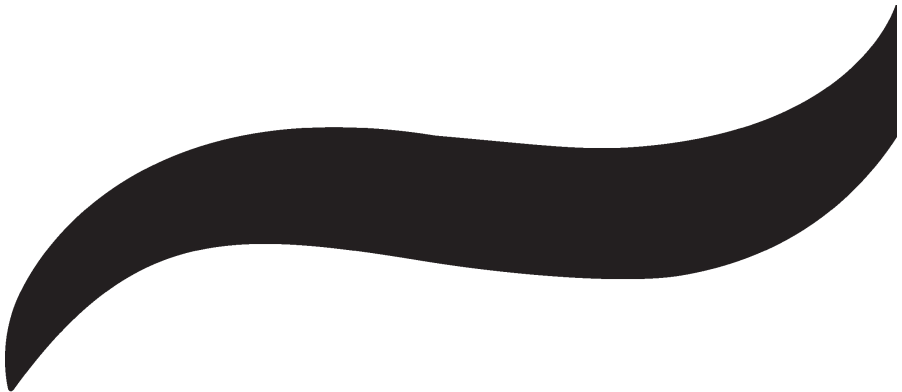




# Hyperventilation

Information for clients





# HYPERVENTILATION

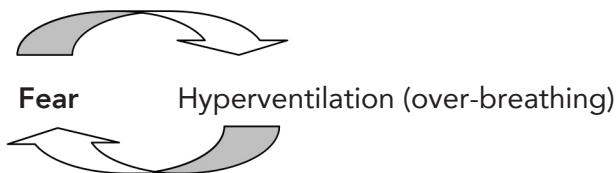
Hyperventilation means breathing in more than your body needs. Another way to describe it is to say 'over-breathing'.

Over-breathing is common during panic attacks. Some over-breathing is part of the body's normal response to threat. It supplies the muscles with more oxygen so that the body is ready to face the threat or to run away. This is known as the 'fight or flight' response.

When you begin to over-breathe, the balance of gases in the lungs is upset. A small amount of carbon dioxide normally stays in the lungs. If you breathe in too much air too often, the carbon dioxide is pushed out. When this happens, it can cause:

- ❖ Difficulty in getting breath
- ❖ Tightness in the chest
- ❖ Very rapid heartbeat
- ❖ Sweating
- ❖ Tingling or numbness
- ❖ Faintness
- ❖ Feeling of unreality
- ❖ Visual problems
- ❖ Rigid muscles, cramps
- ❖ Sudden emotional outburst, for example crying
- ❖ Feeling too hot or too cold

These reactions are caused by **too little** carbon dioxide. They are very frightening in themselves, and can lead to more over-breathing. This is known as the vicious circle of hyperventilation.



## Returning to normal breathing

In order to break the vicious circle of hyperventilation and return to normal breathing, it is important to:

- ❖ Stop over-breathing
- ❖ Make sure there is enough carbon dioxide in the lungs.

## Stopping over-breathing

1. Try to find a quiet place to sit down.
2. Think about the word 'calm'.
3. Try to release some of the tension in your upper body.  
Try loosening your shoulders and sit with a straight back.
4. Now think about your breathing:

STEP 1: Breathe out

STEP 2: Breathe in slowly to the count of four, 'one elephant, two elephant, three elephant, four elephant'

STEP 3: Hold your breath for the count of four

STEP 4: Breathe out slowly while counting elephants

Repeat the above steps until you begin to feel calm.

Remember, don't take too many deep breaths in a row or breathe too quickly, or you will become dizzy.

Take a few ordinary breaths in between the deep ones.

## Getting more carbon dioxide into your lungs

### The re-breathing technique

Breathed-out air has more carbon dioxide in it than ordinary air. If you breathe it in, the carbon dioxide will get back into your lungs more quickly. To do this, follow the steps below:

1. Cup your hands together.
2. Place them over your nose and mouth and keep them there.



3. Breathe in through your nose.
4. Breathe out through your mouth.
5. Breathe your own exhaled air.

This should be done slowly and **without** holding your breath. Repeat no more than four times.

6. **Throughout the exercise try to stay calm and relaxed.**

A paper bag works even better than hands; so if you can find one easily, try that. (**Do not use plastic**).

## FURTHER HELP

### Some useful helplines

- ❖ **No Panic** – free confidential helpline  
Free Helpline (Daily 10am-10pm) Tel: 0800 138 8889
- ❖ **Borderline Helpline** – local mental health helpline offering emotional support (Every evening 7-10pm) Tel: 0800 027 4466
- ❖ **Samaritans** – confidential support for anyone in a crisis  
National Helpline (24 hours a day) Tel: 08457 90 90 90  
Textphone: 08457 90 91 92
- ❖ **Borders** – Tel: 01750 20000 (local rate)  
E-mail Helpline: jo@samaritans.org (answer within 24 hours)

### Panic websites

- ❖ **[www.joepanic.com](http://www.joepanic.com)**

Information and advice on coping skills; introduction to cognitive therapy and worksheets that can be downloaded and completed; explains importance of good breathing and gives exercises to try; comprehensive links and resource pages.

- ❖ **[www.panic-attacks.co.uk](http://www.panic-attacks.co.uk)**

A “panic attack course” that can be completed online or can be emailed to complete in your own time; explains what panic is, why people have panic attacks and how thoughts cause panic; explains how to change the way you think and how to control panic through breathing and relaxation.

- ❖ **[www.nopanic.org.uk](http://www.nopanic.org.uk)**

Comprehensive help for panic and associated conditions. Includes telephone and written recovery programmes. There is an annual membership fee.

*To cut out and keep:*



**doing well**

**Coping with Panic**  
**THINGS TO REMEMBER**

- ❖ The feelings are **normal** bodily reactions; they are **not** harmful
- ❖ Do not add frightening thoughts, describe what is happening
- ❖ Wait for the feelings to pass
- ❖ Plan what to do next, then start off slowly



**doing well**

**Controlling your breathing**  
**THINGS TO REMEMBER**

- ❖ breathe in slowly to the count of four,  
"one elephant, two elephant, three elephant, four elephant"
- ❖ hold your breath for the count of four
- ❖ breathe out slowly while counting elephants

## FURTHER INFORMATION AND SUPPORT:

### Useful Contacts

For information on mental services, supports, opportunities or self-help information call:

- ❖ North Lanarkshire: Well Informed 0800 073 0918
- ❖ South Lanarkshire: Lanarkshire Association for Mental Health Information Line: 0330 3000 133

For further information on mental health and well-being, visit Lanarkshire's Element website: [www.element.org.uk](http://www.element.org.uk)

Remember, should your problems persist or you feel you need help urgently please contact your GP. The following organisations can also prove useful in and out of hours.

- ❖ **Breathing Space** - 0800 83 85 87  
(Mon - Thu, 6pm - 2am; Fri 6pm - Mon 6am)  
[www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk](http://www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk)
- ❖ **Samaritans** - 116 123 (24hrs) [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)
- ❖ **NHS24** - 111 (Out of hours) [www.nhs24.com](http://www.nhs24.com)
- ❖ **Healthy Working Lives** - 08452 300 323 (Local),  
0800 019 2211 (National),  
[www.healthyworkinglives.com](http://www.healthyworkinglives.com)
- ❖ **Childline** - 0800 11 11 (24hrs) [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)
- ❖ **NHS Inform** - 0800 22 44 88 [www.nhsinform.co.uk](http://www.nhsinform.co.uk)
- ❖ **Parentline Scotland** - 0808 800 22 22  
[www.children1st.org.uk/parentline](http://www.children1st.org.uk/parentline)
- ❖ **National Debt Line Scotland** - 0808 808 4000  
[www.nationaldebtline.co.uk/scotland](http://www.nationaldebtline.co.uk/scotland)
- ❖ **National Domestic Abuse Helpline** - 0800 027 1234



## WHAT IS WELL CONNECTED?

Well Connected is a new programme in Lanarkshire, sometimes referred to as social prescribing or community referral. It makes it easier for us and people we know to take part in and benefit from activities and services that we know improve our well-being which means how we feel about ourselves and our lives. There are a number of Well Connected areas available to us and we can benefit from more than one:

- ❖ Physical activity and leisure opportunities
- ❖ Volunteering
- ❖ Employment
- ❖ Arts and culture
- ❖ Benefits, welfare and debt advice
- ❖ Learning opportunities
- ❖ Calm Distress online course
- ❖ Health Walks
- ❖ Mindfulness Classes.

For information on any of the above call:

- ❖ North Lanarkshire: Well Informed 0800 073 0918
- ❖ South Lanarkshire: Lanarkshire Association for Mental Health Information Line: 0330 3000 133
- ❖ Visit: [www.elament.org.uk/self-help-resources/well-connected-programme.aspx](http://www.elament.org.uk/self-help-resources/well-connected-programme.aspx)

## HEALTHY READING

All public libraries have a healthy reading section making it easier to access mental health and well-being leaflets, books, CDs, DVDs and web-based support. All libraries across Lanarkshire have resources to help us get the most from life such as living life to the full, sleeping better and becoming more confident or overcoming and coping with mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, stress, dementia and panic. There are also resources for all ages including supporting young people, adults and older people as well as items on positive parenting. Simply pop into your local library.

## GUIDED SUPPORT:

### Calm Distress

Calm Distress is a new online course from NHS Lanarkshire Psychological Services, designed for you to use in your own time and at your own pace. It is all about understanding emotions and wellbeing, during Covid-19 and beyond. It is open — and free — to all adults who have a Lanarkshire GP.

Over five friendly sessions, Calm Distress will help you learn new ways to cope with difficult thoughts and feelings. Each session lasts about 20 minutes, giving you lots of useful information in the time it takes to drink a cup of tea.

You can access Calm Distress through the NHS Lanarkshire Mind Matters website:

**[www.lanarkshiremindmatters.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.lanarkshiremindmatters.scot.nhs.uk)**

### **Living Life to the Full - Online Course**

Living Life to The Full is a free web-based life skills course that aims to help us tackle and respond to issues/demands which we all meet in our everyday lives. It will explore issues such as understanding why we feel the way we do, problem solving, noticing and challenging unhelpful thoughts and behaviours and anxiety control. You can register for the course at **[www.llttf.com](http://www.llttf.com)** and complete as many or as few modules as you wish.

If you feel you need additional help, the Living Life to The Full course is also available with support from self help coaches (via Action on Depression Scotland). To find out more visit **[www.aod.llttfionline.co.uk](http://www.aod.llttfionline.co.uk)**

### **Living Life: Guided Self Help and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy - Telephone Support**

Living Life is a free telephone support service for people suffering from low mood, mild to moderate depression, symptoms of anxiety or a combination of both. Trained Self-help coaches and therapists will guide us through a range of workbooks over a series of telephone sessions. For more information or to make a telephone appointment, call **0800 328 9655** (Mon–Fri 1–9pm).

# CONFIDENTIALITY AND THE USE OF PATIENT INFORMATION

NHS Lanarkshire take care to ensure your personal information is only accessible to authorised people. Our staff have a legal and contractual duty to keep personal health information secure, and confidential. In order to find out more about current data protection legislation and how we process your information, please visit the Data Protection Notice on our website at [www.nhslanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.nhslanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk) or ask a member of staff for a copy of our Data Protection Notice.

**NHS Lanarkshire** - for local services and the latest health news visit [www.nhslanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.nhslanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk)  
NHS Lanarkshire General  
Enquiry Line: 0300 30 30 243

**NHS inform** - The national health information service for Scotland.  
[www.nhsinform.co.uk](http://www.nhsinform.co.uk)  
Tel No: 0800 22 44 88

If you need this information in another language or format, please e-mail: Translation.  
[Services@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:Services@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk)



[www.careopinion.org.uk](http://www.careopinion.org.uk)

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