

# Breathlessness

Breathlessness or dyspnea may be caused by a number of reasons. It may be brought on by the progression of a disease, psychological factors such as anxiety or panic attacks, by pleural infusion (water on the lungs), or by pneumonia (infection or bacteria).

According to [Medical News Today](#), signs that a person is experiencing dyspnea or air-hunger include:

- shortness of breath after exertion or due to a medical condition
- feeling smothered or suffocated as a result of breathing difficulties
- laboured breathing
- tightness in the chest
- rapid, shallow breathing
- heart palpitations
- wheezing
- coughing

You may find that the dying person is more drowsy. Medication is available however you may wish to try non-medicinal treatments first, with the approval of the health care providers. Other treatments might include:

- pursed lips breathing (explanatory [video](#))
- using a fan to blow cool air across the face
- re-propping pillows
- elevating the head of the bed by up to 2"

The [Home Oxygen Services](#) program through Continuing Care may also be needed. This program “funds oxygen equipment such as oxygen concentrators, portable oxygen tanks and other related supplies”. Eligibility and further details are available by contacting Continuing Care at 1-800-225-7225.

