

## Shortness of **BREATH**

There are both medical and 'non-medical' causes for feeling short of breath

### Common Medical causes

- › COPD exacerbation
- › Fluid build up from heart failure
- › Pneumonia/infection
- › Fever
- › Anemia

### Common 'Non-Medical' causes

- › Untreated pain
- › Anxiety
- › Emotional/spiritual distress
- › Oxygen unit- not working, tubes kinked
- › Room too hot
- › Doing too much, lying flat instead of upright

### Common Things to Try



Make sure oxygen is connected and flowing



Try pursed lip breathing -  [Video Link](#)



Blow fan across face - this is very effective!!!

Elevate the head of the bed



Relaxation techniques - music, quiet place, meditation



Talk with loved one, spiritual counselor, friend about how you are feeling

## Medical Treatments

- Opioids are very effective at relieving shortness of breath. The prescribed Opioid medication can and should be used! Opioids can provide rapid relief. If using pill form, within 30 min, liquid form can work within 5-10 min
- If feeling anxious, use the prescribed anxiety medication - lorazepam (ativan)
- Inhaler medications can be used if wheezing is present or if they have been used before for breathing problems

## When to Call the Hospice

- Shortness of breath is increasing despite above measures
- Oxygen unit is not working
- Running low on medications - Opioids, anxiety medications, inhalers
- Uncontrolled coughing