

Facial Cooling for Breathlessness

A simple way to help reduce the feeling of being short of breath

What is facial cooling?

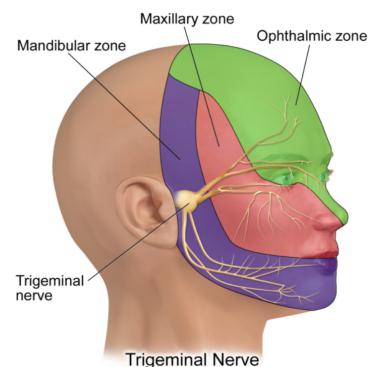
Facial cooling is a simple technique that involves directing cool air onto your face, particularly around your nose, cheeks and mouth. Many people find that it reduces the sensation of breathlessness and helps them feel calmer during an episode of shortness of breath.

It is a safe, inexpensive strategy that can be used alongside your usual treatments and breathing exercises.

How does it work?

Although facial cooling does not change your oxygen levels or improve lung function, it can change how your brain perceives breathlessness.

Research has shown that cool air stimulates nerves in the face, particularly the trigeminal nerve in the Maxillary and Ophthalmic zone, sending signals to the brain that can reduce the sensation of breathlessness.



Facial cooling can:

- reduce feelings of panic or anxiety associated with breathlessness.
- help you regain control of your breathing.
- encourage slower, more relaxed breathing.
- be used alongside breathing retraining techniques.

How to use facial cooling

You can use:

- a small handheld fan
- a desk fan
- cool air from an open window
- a cool, damp flannel placed over your cheeks
- a cool water mist spray to the face



If using a handheld fan:

1. Hold it around 15–20 cm from your face.
2. Aim the airflow towards your nose, mouth and cheeks.
3. Move the fan slowly side to side.
4. Breathe gently and slowly, blowing out through pursed lips can help extend the exhale.
5. Continue for 2–5 minutes, or until your breathing feels easier.

A cool face can help a calm breath.

Facial cooling is recommended in UK and international guidance as a simple, non-drug way to help manage breathlessness.

Note: *This technique is a management tool. If your breathlessness is new, suddenly worsens, or doesn't respond to your usual medication, please seek urgent medical advice.*