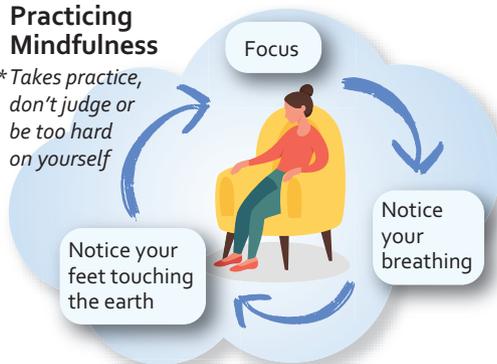


Mindfulness for Those with COPD, Asthma, Lung Cancer, and Lung Transplantation

Mindfulness is paying attention purposefully to the present moment, without judgement. This is a skill that you can learn and use in all aspects of your daily life. Mindfulness training was first developed to help people suffering with chronic pain. It is now used for many different reasons. People have used mindfulness to help live with a variety of chronic illnesses and to help enhance general health and well-being.

Practicing Mindfulness

**Takes practice, don't judge or be too hard on yourself*



If your mind wanders—begin again

People with chronic lung problems such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) have found it helpful. Mindfulness helps decrease symptoms of anxiety and depression that are commonly found in those who have chronic lung disease. It has also been used in the military, with professional athletes and business people, and by healthcare professionals. Mindfulness practice may also be helpful for caregivers of loved ones with chronic diseases or cancer.

The most common form of training is called Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and is a series of classes using a combination of guided meditation practices and group discussion. Mindfulness has also been combined with cognitive behavioral therapy, which is a type of psychotherapy that helps change negative thought patterns or unwanted behaviors into positive goals in order to help people feel better.

This fact sheet will teach you how to do a mindful breathing exercise, how mindfulness helps in some common lung problems and give you information about mindfulness training.

Self-Guided Mindful Breathing Exercise

You can do this exercise as a brief daily mindfulness exercise. You may also find it helpful to do when you are having times of shortness of breath or emotional distress. The basic steps are as follows:

- Sit upright with both feet on the ground, legs uncrossed, hands in your lap

- Close your eyes or rest your gaze softly a few inches in front of you.
- Notice the physical points of contact between you and your chair (or other supporting surface) and the ground beneath your feet.
- Bring your attention to your breath (the sensations of your hands or feet if focusing on the breath is difficult).
- Notice the sensation of the earth or floor against your feet or the flow of air in and out. Focus on your feet or your breath—whichever is easier for you. If thoughts, feelings, other bodily sensations capture your attention, notice that and gently bring your attention back to your feet or breath.
- If you are having shortness of breath, inhale through your nose as if smelling roses for a count of 4 seconds, and exhale through your mouth, pursing your lips as if you are blowing out birthday candles for a count of at least 8 seconds. Repeat this 3-5 times.
- Then bring your attention back to your breath, breathing in and out through your nose.
- When you are ready to end the practice, open your eyes again, and take the next few moments to notice how you feel now, compared to before you started the meditation.
- Thank yourself for taking the time to self-care.



Use of Mindfulness with Various Lung and Mental Health Problems

COPD

Mindfulness-based therapy, yoga and relaxation were all included in the international GOLD COPD 2019 and 2020 clinical guidelines. Mindfulness has been used to reduce anxiety and depression, improve physical outcomes such as lung function, shortness of breath, and fatigue in those with COPD and psychological problems. There has been limited research on mindfulness and results were limited in part due to problems with how well people followed the training and differences in training approaches/formats. There is some evidence of benefit.

While mindfulness has been largely shown to benefit those with COPD, its applicability needs to be combined with education and individualization to maximize its potential for benefit.

Asthma

A few studies have looked at mindfulness training in adults with asthma. People with asthma who used mindfulness had less stress, reduced depression and improved asthma related quality of life.

Anxiety and Depression

A number of studies have looked at how mindfulness practice may benefit people with anxiety and depression. Studies have shown decreased anxiety and depression in people with mental health issues.

Lung Cancer

A study done using a telephone-based mindfulness program showed improved communication and reduced pain and distress in lung cancer patients and their caregivers.

Organ Transplant

Researchers found that people with a solid organ transplant (including some with lung transplant) who took mindfulness classes had reduced anxiety and sleep disruption symptoms compared to a control group who had not had the mindfulness training.

Despite the limited data available, overall, mindfulness has the potential to benefit people with lung disease, particularly if they also have anxiety and depression. In summary, mindfulness training is promising, but more research is needed in people with lung disease. The evidence for reducing anxiety and depression which are commonly found in those with chronic lung disease is strong. Mindfulness is a very accessible skill that can be learned and practiced by patients, anytime, anywhere.

How can I learn more about mindfulness training?

If you are interested in learning more about mindfulness,

please refer to the free references below. If you would like to take a class or practice mindfulness and think you might have an undiagnosed mood disorder, please speak with your healthcare professional about whether taking a mindfulness course is right for you. Often, people with anxiety and depression can take mindfulness classes while they seek treatment, but coordination of care is important for safety.

Authors: Ni-Cheng Liang MD, Tania Von Visger APRN, PhD, Asha Devereaux MD

Reviewers: Marianna Sockrider MD, DrPH

Rx Summary

- ✓ Mindfulness is paying attention to the present moment without judgement.
- ✓ It is a skill that can be learned and practiced.
- ✓ Mindfulness decreases anxiety and depression symptoms, which are often times experienced by those with chronic lung diseases
- ✓ While data in mindfulness amongst those with chronic lung disease is limited, there is significant potential for improving quality of life amongst patients.

Healthcare Provider's Contact Number:

For More Information

University of Massachusetts Center for Mindfulness

- <https://umassmed.edu/cfm/>

(online courses available)

University of California San Diego Center for Mindfulness

- <https://health.ucsd.edu/specialties/mindfulness/Pages/default.aspx>

Free guided mindfulness meditations:

- <https://health.ucsd.edu/specialties/mindfulness/programs/mbsr/Pages/audio.aspx>

Mayo Clinic with Roberto Benzo, MD, Founding Director of the Mindful Breathing Laboratory

Free mindfulness videos:

- <https://www.mayo.edu/research/labs/mindful-breathing/videos>

Mindful Healing Collective

- <https://mindfulhealingcollective.com>

This information is a public service of the American Thoracic Society. The content is for educational purposes only. It should not be used as a substitute for the medical advice of one's healthcare provider.

