

Palliative Care Team

Breathlessness Intervention Service

Information for Carers

Caring for someone who has severe breathlessness can be very tiring, both emotionally and physically. Seeing someone experience breathlessness can also be very distressing for relatives and other close family and friends.

Caring may also be something that you very much want to do and take pride in doing because you recognise that no-one else can be as close to that person and such a great comfort as you can be. However, it is very important that you are able to pace yourself and get any extra help that is available to enable you to continue doing what you want to do, and also continue to have a life of your own. Looking after your health and having some of your own interests and pleasures is not selfish; it is a very vital step in taking care of yourself. Not only do you need to be healthy to continue to be able to look after your loved one and other people in your family, but also to retain a sense of who you are and what you need to give you a healthy perspective on life.

In the Breathlessness Intervention Service (BIS) we feel it is very important to support carers. However we acknowledge that we often do not see those caring for the patient, "carers", because they are out working or have other things they need to do when we visit. In this leaflet we describe some of the ways in which you may be able to get help for yourself and urge you, if you wish, to have at least a telephone conversation with a member of the BIS team, whilst we are seeing your relative or friend. Here are some ideas:

Assessments for carers

If you regularly care for someone aged 18 or over, you can ask your local council's for a carer's assessment. This is an opportunity for you to tell a health or social care professional what impact the caring has on you, and will enable them to see if you are entitled to any services that could make caring easier for you. You can obtain more information about the carer's assessment from your local council or on the government website www.direct.gov.uk

Services for carers

If your friend or relative is involved with the hospice or being visited by a Community Palliative Care Service, such as a Macmillan nurse or a doctor from the hospice, ask them about services that are provided at your local hospice for carers.

Your local GP and district nurse

Often when your GP or district nurse is visiting someone with breathlessness the carer does not ask for help with the things that they need. The GP and the district nurse either in the home or at the Practice can be a great support to individual carers and help them to look after their own health. It is very important, for example, if you have a chronic condition of your own or if you develop new symptoms that you quickly go to see the doctor or a Practice nurse to get the help you need.

Crossroads or other carer support charities

Your Library, your district nurse, your Hospice, will all be able to point you in the direction of charities or local organisations which exist to give carers a break when they are looking after someone who is ill. These are either no cost or low cost services. Look out for their numbers for the service in your area.

Citizens Advice Bureau

The Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) will help you to get any grants or other money or benefits that you are entitled to because the government and society recognises that caring for someone is a tiring but a highly important role. Any money that they give to somebody who needs caring for can be used to address your own needs too.

Finally

We would very much like to meet you or at least talk to you during the time that we are seeing your relative or friend to help with their breathlessness. Do let us know if there is a good time and if it is really difficult, at least we could arrange to speak on the telephone. We look forward to hearing from you.

Our contact details are:

Telephone: 01223 586703

You may find it useful to refer to our website for more information and advice:

www.cuh.org.uk/breathlessness

Other Useful Contacts:

- Crossroads Care: 0845 450 0350
- Age UK: 0800 6565



We are currently working towards a smoke-free site. Smoking is only permitted in the designated smoking areas.

For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS Stop Smoking Helpline on 0800 169 0 169

Help with this leaflet:



If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio format, please ask the department to contact Patient Information: 01223 216032 or

patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk



Document history

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