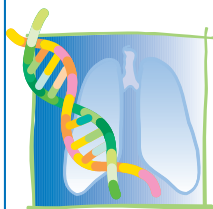
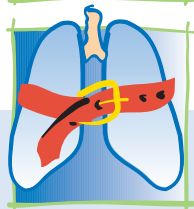


## Want to find out more?

“Living with Alpha-1-Antitrypsin Deficiency“ is a patient information program. Its aim is to explain the causes, risks and treatment of the disease. The brochures illustrated below can be ordered free of charge on the internet at [www.alpha-1-info.com](http://www.alpha-1-info.com)



Breathless –  
The Whys and Wherefores



What happens in  
Alpha-1-Antitrypsin Deficiency?



What can individuals with  
Alpha-1-Antitrypsin Deficiency  
do for their health? (Additional  
brochures on protection of the  
lungs, nutrition, and exercise)

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## How can people with Alpha-1-Antitrypsin Deficiency manage stress?



*Living with  
Alpha-1-Antitrypsin  
Deficiency*

Patient Information Program

## *About this booklet*

Anyone's health will suffer as a result of severe stress and feelings of helplessness over time.

However, stress affects the health of individuals with Alpha-1-Antitrypsin Deficiency (AAT deficiency) more rapidly by increasing the effort required to breathe. On the following pages you will find out what you personally can do for yourself and learn some strategies for coping with stress.

Please remember: No booklet can replace a discussion with your doctor. You should therefore consult your doctor if you still have any questions after reading this booklet.

## *Why is coping with stress so important?*

When you have to deal with a chronic illness on top of your other day-to-day worries, the result can be anxiety and tension. The ability to cope with these feelings will boost your self-esteem and help you to be more content with your situation. It will also help you avoid the adverse health effects of stress, which can weaken your resistance and make you susceptible to infections.

## *What are the benefits of strategies for coping with stress?*

Besides improving your well-being, the ability to cope with stress improves coordinated breathing, reduces the occurrence of shortness of breath and relieves anxiety.

## *How can I reduce stress?*

A number of methods are available for reducing stress. Commonly used techniques are:

- Breathing exercises
- Muscle relaxation

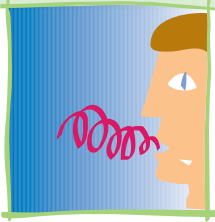
Other methods of value include:

- Yoga
- Systematic desensitization
- Biofeedback
- Positive thinking
- Visualization

Another popular relaxation technique that can be learned inexpensively in any larger city (for example in adult education classes) is:

- Autogenic training

## Breathing exercises



If you take time to develop suitable techniques for controlled breathing, you'll be able to reduce stress while at the same time improve your physical stamina.

Assume a comfortable position and try to take a deep breath. The aim is to relax the shoulders and develop a perception of the inward and outward movement of the diaphragm in time with your breathing. Purse your lips when you breathe out in order to control the expiration better and prolong it. Do this for four to five minutes two or three times a day.

Once you've developed this technique, you can use it at any time in a stressful situation. You should practice correct breathing on a daily basis.

## Yoga

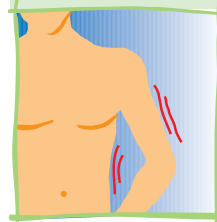


Yoga involves controlled movement and slow, deep breathing.

By joining a yoga class, you can develop this breathing technique so that it becomes second nature.

You will then be able to use it more or less instinctively in stressful situations.

## Muscle relaxation



Stress can lead to hard, tense muscles. As soon as you relax your muscles, you experience a general sense of well-being.

Lie on your back or sit in a comfortable position. Breathe in deeply and slowly, tense each muscle group one after the other: the hands, feet, arms and legs followed by the chest, shoulders and abdomen. Breathe out before you relax each muscle group.

By repeating this technique, you'll learn to recognize the signs of tension and react accordingly.

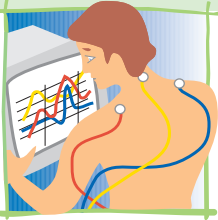
## Visualization



With this technique you picture your negative feelings in your mind and then change them into something positive. Let's say, for instance, that you may feel angry about your physical impairment. Identify this anger with the color red.

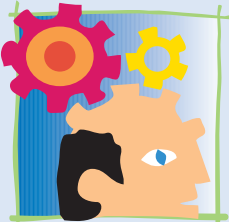
Then try to change the red into another color, for instance, green, that has a more pleasant association for you. Music and painting can intensify this relaxing effect.

## Biofeedback



In biofeedback, noises or lights are used to reinforce the right breathing and relaxation techniques. Sensors on your shoulders or around your neck trigger an acoustic or light signal if you use these muscles in the wrong way during breathing. The signals stop when you've learned to breathe correctly and relax your neck and shoulders. Sessions usually last 15 to 30 minutes. At the end you should have learned to use your muscles correctly. The visual or acoustic signals will then no longer be necessary.

## Systematic desensitization



You're asked to make a list of stress triggers, for instance sport, travel or going out, and to rank them in order of severity. Then you have to imagine the least stressful activity and concentrate

on it during a relaxation phase until you've come to terms with it. Imagine each stress trigger on your list one after the other until, by frequently repeating the process, you've overcome your anxiety about them.

## Positive thinking



This technique involves transforming negative thoughts into positive ones.

The statement "I can't walk very far without getting short of breath and panicking", for example, could be reformulated into "I'll rest, then go for a five-minute walk".

## Summary

- *Overcoming stress with relaxation techniques can improve your breathing and reduce the occurrence of shortness of breath and anxiety.*
- *Muscle relaxation and breathing exercises are the most popular strategies for overcoming stress.*