



Gasping for Air (Straws) Activity

Time: 5 minutes

Materials Needed: Straws (coffee stirrer size), one per person

Preparation: None

Instruction/Script:

1. Say, "We are going to participate in an activity that demonstrates how difficult it might be to breathe in certain situations. If someone has asthma you need to be careful during this activity. If anyone feels light headed or faint, you should stop and take a good, deep breath."
2. Provide each participant with a coffee straw.
3. Ask participants to pinch their nostrils closed and place the straw in their mouth.
4. Have participants breathe through the straw for one minute while someone else times them.
5. Ask students what it was like to breathe through the straw.
6. Say, "The long term effects of smoking cigarettes are very serious. Breathing through the coffee straw demonstrates what it is like to breathe when you have chronic obstructive lung disease, like emphysema for example."

With emphysema, there is limited airflow in and out of the lungs because the smallest air passages to the lungs are destroyed by cigarette smoke.

It becomes difficult for the lungs to bring in oxygen and remove carbon dioxide. The heart must work hard to get oxygen to the cells.

Emphysema is non-reversible. Someone who is diagnosed with emphysema may live 5, 10, 15 years with the disease. What kind of quality of life do they have?"