



Patient Information

Chest Clearance – Active Cycle of Breathing Techniques

It is normal to have mucus in the airways. It is produced by cells that are in the lining of the airway walls and moves continuously up through the airways towards the throat and mouth.

Why does a lung produce excess mucus?

- In lung conditions such as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and bronchiectasis, the lining of the airways is irritated and produces more mucus.
- When you have an infection in the airways, the lining of the lung can become inflamed and irritated and so produces more mucus.

Why does mucus change colour when there is an infection?

- The change in mucus colour is caused by the body's immune response to the presence of pathogens (bacteria or viruses).
- When mucus changes colour this can indicate the presence of infection.

Why is it important to keep the chest clear of excess mucus?

- Excess mucus in the airways makes breathing harder.
- Mucus which gets stuck can allow pathogens to develop and cause a chest infection.

How you can keep your chest clear?

Drinking Fluids: Drinking plenty is important particularly if you have excess mucus. Water helps to keep the mucus thin and easier to remove.

Keep active: Exercise includes any activity which increases your heart rate and breathing rate. It is advisable to do some activity during the day, even when you feel unwell, to help shift mucus from your chest.

Positions: Sitting upright with your arms supported and your shoulders relaxed is a good position for helping to ventilate the lungs and clear mucus. Other positions are also used – these will be discussed with you by your therapist if appropriate.

Medications: Carbocisteine (Mucodyne) is a medication which loosens airway secretions and makes them easier to clear. During an acute infection you may be given nebulised medications which can help to clear secretions. Taking your



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Salbutamol 10 minutes before any chest clearance exercise will make the clearance more effective because your airways will be open.

Chest Clearance Exercises

Below you will find a description of the Active Cycle of Breathing Technique (ACBT), an effective exercise for clearing the chest.

Active Cycle of Breathing Technique

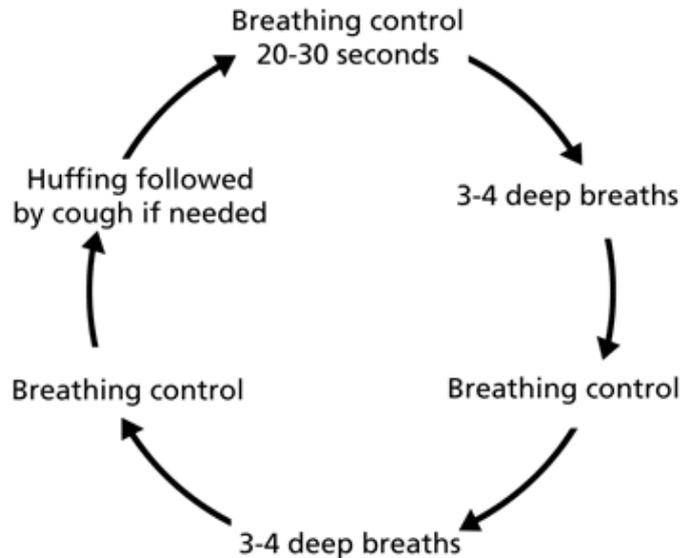
Description of parts:

Breathing Control- Place one hand over your diaphragm, and one hand over the top of your chest. As you breathe in, you should feel your diaphragm rise away from your body, as you breathe out you should feel it sink back in. Try to keep your shoulders and upper chest completely relaxed.

Deep Breaths- Draw in a larger volume of air, using the diaphragm to ensure the air gets to the bottom of your lungs. Hold it, then sigh out gently through an open mouth.

Long huff- Take a small breath in, open your mouth wide and huff out, as if you were steaming up a mirror. Repeat this 2-3 times.

Short huff- Take in a deep breath, then huff out through an open mouth. The huff should be short and sharp.



For further information please discuss with your physiotherapist or telephone the team office on 01793 605126 Monday to Friday 8:00-16:30, this has an answerphone service if the office is unmanned.

Smoking will not be permitted on any NHS site in England. Smoking will not be permitted within any of our buildings or anywhere outside on our sites. Smoking facilities will not be provided. Please be considerate of others when vaping in hospital grounds.

This information sheet is available to order in other languages and formats. If you would like a copy, please contact us on 01793 604031 or email

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