

Patient Information

Breathing exercises for chest clearance

Introduction

This leaflet describes breathing exercises which may help you to clear excess sputum to help your lungs to function more effectively.

If you have an airway clearance device, you may want to incorporate this into the cycle, a physiotherapist can guide you as to how this can be done.

Breathing exercise

The Active Cycle of Breathing Techniques (ACBT) can be very helpful for clearing sputum and making breathing easier. If done regularly, this simple exercise will help you manage your condition and possibly reduce exacerbations.

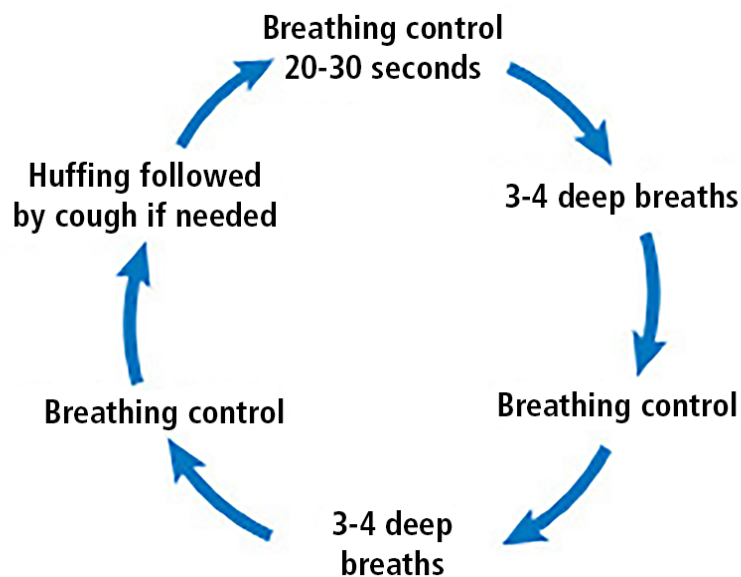


Figure 1: The Active Cycle of Breathing Techniques

Reference No.

GHPI0346_01_25

Department

Therapy

Review due

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Information**

Complete the exercise in the following order:

1. Breathing control

- Settle yourself in a relaxed position; sitting or lying on your side.



- Make sure your back is supported.
- Keep your upper chest and shoulders relaxed.
- Breathe gently in through your nose, and out through your mouth.
- Rest your hand on the top of your stomach. Feel your stomach rising under your hand as you breathe in and falling under your hand as you breathe out.
- Concentrate on the lower part of your chest moving rather than the upper part.
- Breathe at a rate which feels comfortable, it will slow down as control is regained.
- With practice, breathing control will become easier. You will then be able to use this method at rest, on exertion or when you feel especially breathless.

2. Long deep breaths

- Take a slow, long breath in through your nose, hold for a couple of seconds and breathe out gently through your nose or mouth. Repeat 3 or 4 times.
- Repeat breathing control.

3. Huffing

- 1 or 2 huffs – huffing is exhaling through an open mouth and throat (imagine steaming up your glasses).
- If you huff too hard, it may sound wheezy.
- Repeat breathing control.

Continue the exercise cycle until the sputum is ready to be cleared. Cough to clear, then dispose of the sputum in a tissue or pot.

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If after 2 to 3 cycles, you are unable to clear any sputum, stop and return to the cycle later.

Repeat as often as necessary until your chest feels clear and your breathing is easier. At times of exacerbation, you may need to do this more frequently.

Other useful tips:

- Use nebulisers (if available) before airway clearance for best results.
- Drink plenty of clear fluids to stay hydrated.
- Monitor your sputum for any changes (colour, thickness, amount, smell, taste) and consult your GP if you are concerned.

Contact information

Therapy Department

Cheltenham General Hospital

Tel: 0300 422 3040

Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 4:30pm

Gloucestershire Royal Hospital

Tel: 0300 422 8527

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Further information

Asthma + Lung UK

Helpline: 0300 222 5800

Website: www.asthmaandlung.org.uk

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Making a choice

Shared Decision Making

If you are asked to make a choice, you may have lots of questions that you want to ask. You may also want to talk over your options with your family or friends. It can help to write a list of the questions you want answered and take it to your appointment.



Ask 3 Questions

To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions if you are asked to make a choice about your healthcare.

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?

These resources have been adapted with kind permission from the MAGIC Programme, supported by the Health Foundation

* Ask 3 Questions is based on Shepherd HL, et al. Three questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial. Patient Education and Counselling, 2011;84: 379-85



<https://aqua.nhs.uk/resources/shared-decision-making-case-studies/>