

Patient Information

Breathing exercises for chest clearance

Introduction

This leaflet explains how you can clear your chest more effectively. Breathing exercises may help you to clear excess sputum and improve lung function.

Breathing exercise

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

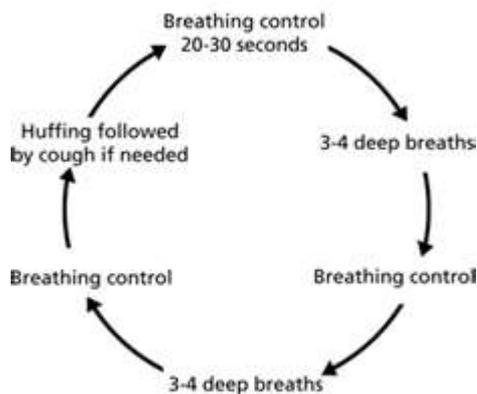
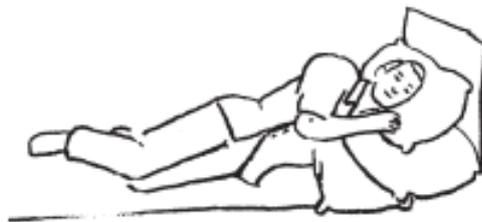


Figure 1: The active cycle of breathing

Complete the exercise in the following order:

1. Relaxed breathing

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



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Therapy

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- Make sure your back is supported
- Keep your upper chest and shoulders relaxed
- 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
- 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 the nose, hold for a couple of seconds and breathe out gently through your nose or mouth. Repeat this 3 or 4 times
- **Repeat relaxed breathing**

3. Huffing

- 1 or 2 huffs (imagine steaming up your glasses) followed by a cough
- Do not force your cough
- Repeat relaxed breathing

Continue the exercise cycle as above until the sputum is ready to be cleared.

Repeat as often as necessary until your chest feels clear and your breathing is easier.

Contact information

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Further information

British Lung Foundation

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