

## References

Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Respiratory Care (2011) Leaflet No. GL-05 The Active Cycle of Breathing Techniques.

The Trust endeavours to ensure that the information given here is accurate and impartial.



If you require this information in another language, large print, audio (CD or tape) or braille please email the Patient Information team at [patient.information@ulh.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@ulh.nhs.uk)

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# Chest Clearance

Physiotherapy Departments

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## Chest Clearance

As your airways are altered/damaged they can produce more sputum. By clearing sputum from your chest you may be able to notice an improvement in your breathing, prevent infections and reduce the amount you cough. Sputum left in your chest may worsen your disease and/or symptoms.

Breathing exercises such as the Active Cycle of Breathing Technique is useful in loosening and moving sputum to maintain a clear chest.

## Active Cycle of Breathing Technique (ACBT)

ACBT is a flexible technique and can be varied to suit you. Your physiotherapist will advise you accordingly. ACBT involves 3 stages:

**Breathing control** - this is normal relaxed breathing, with your upper chest and shoulders relaxed. It helps you to relax before deep breathing or huffing and can be used in between the different stages of ACBT. Try where possible to breath in and out through your nose.

**Deep breathing** – long, slow deep breaths in, followed by relaxed breaths out. It is not advisable to do more than 3 to 5 consecutively. You may find it beneficial to hold your breath for 2 to 3 seconds at the end of the breath in (your physiotherapist will advise you of this if necessary).

**Huffing** - this helps to move sputum along the airways to a point where you can clear it. A huff involves exhaling with your mouth open which can be more effective than coughing. There are 2 types of huff:

1. Small-long huff – take a small to medium breath in then huff out until your lungs feel empty.
2. Big-short huff – take a big, deep breath in then huff out quickly.

If you are unsure about any of the information, feel free to discuss it with your physiotherapist.

## Physiotherapy contact details

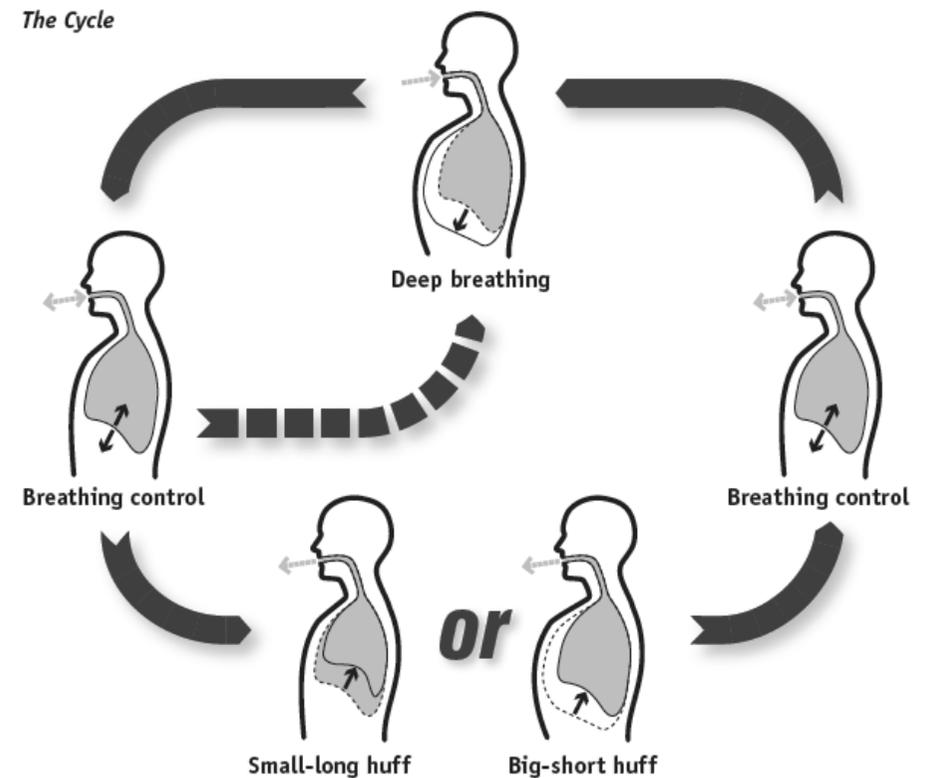
|                                    |              |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| Lincoln County Hospital .....      | 01522 573945 |
| Grantham & District Hospital ..... | 01476 464253 |
| Pilgrim Hospital .....             | 01205 445359 |
| County Hospital Louth.....         | 01507 631259 |

**Your Physiotherapist is called:**

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## Other advice

- Try to breathe through your nose if possible to warm the air.
- Try steam inhalations, but take care to avoid the risk of burns/scalds.
- Ensure you drink enough fluids, such as; water, squash or juice, as keeping well hydrated will help you to clear your sputum.
- To reduce the likelihood of a night time cough, avoid lying completely flat.
- Always use medications as prescribed.
- Regular exercise may assist in moving your secretions and will help to maintain fitness and lung function.
- Stopping smoking – substances within cigarettes irritate the lungs and cause excess sputum production. For further advice ask your physiotherapist or GP.
- Know your own chest – if secretions change e.g. get thicker, change colour or the volume increases, see your GP or respiratory nurse.



## Am I huffing correctly?

A huff should make it feel like the sputum in your chest is rumbling/rattling. When this happens the sputum is moving up your airways. If huffing causes a wheeze, you may be huffing too hard or for too long. Always follow a huff with breathing control.

A huff should clear the sputum, if not you may need to cough at the end of completing ACBT. Where possible avoid long bouts of coughing as they may make you tired and/or breathless.

## How long should I spend doing ACBT?

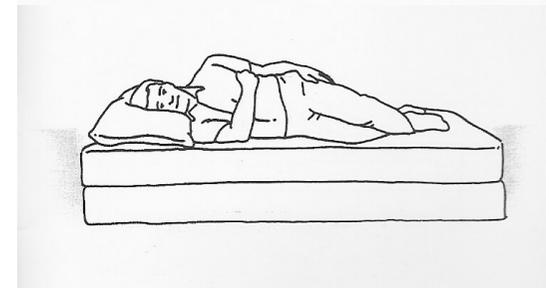
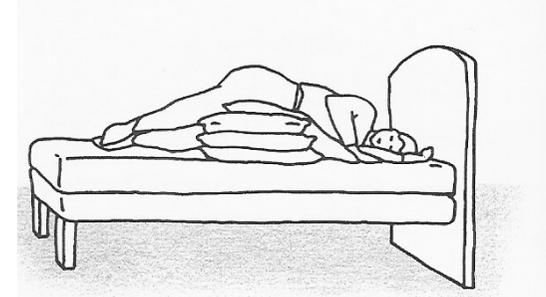
You should repeat ACBT cycles until no more sputum is produced and your chest feels clear or stop if you get tired before this.

## How often/when will I need to clear my chest?

- If you produce sputum every day then you will need to clear your lungs at least once per day.
- If you only cough up phlegm occasionally you may only need to do the cycle of breathing when needed, e.g. when you have a chest infection.
- If you have been prescribed any inhalers or nebulisers that open up your airways it is normally best to do ACBT 15 minutes after you have taken these.
- If you have an infection and your cough is more productive than usual you will need to practice the cycle more often.

## In what position should I practice this technique?

ACBT can be completed in any position which is most comfortable or most effective for you. Commonly this is a sitting posture, however, it can be completed in side lying to allow gravity to assist in sputum clearance. Avoid side lying positions immediately after a meal as they may cause nausea. Your physiotherapist can advise you of an appropriate position.



**Recommended position for clearance of your chest:**

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