

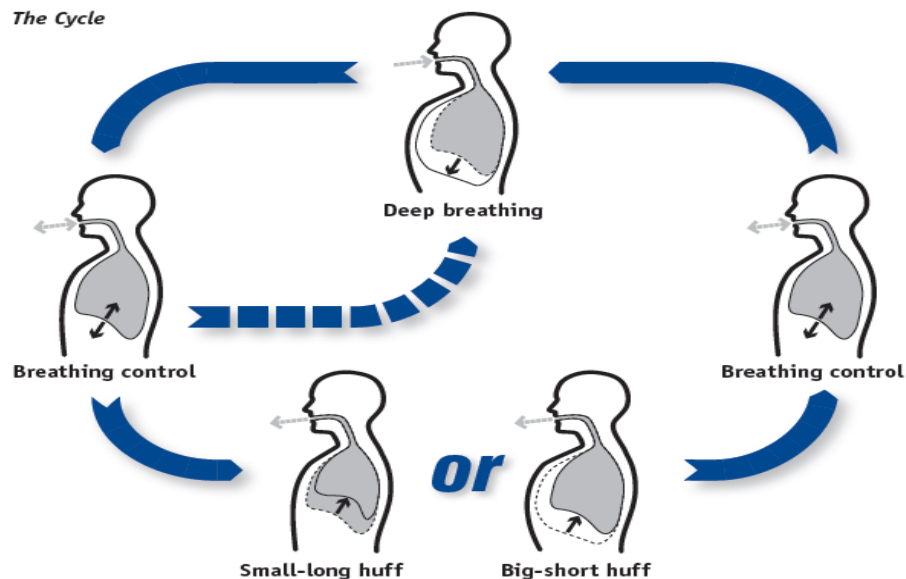
can use to help treat phlegm clearance and they will inform you as necessary.

## What should I do?

It is important to remember that you can clear your chest effectively with the exercises we give you. The treatment with your therapist is just an extra tool.

Continue your chest clearance exercises regularly throughout the day and about 1/2 hour after nebulizer treatment, as you will find it less tiring and phlegm easier to clear.

*The Cycle*



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

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## Chest Physiotherapy

What is it?  
Why do I need it?  
How will it benefit me?

Physiotherapy Departments  
Lincoln • Pilgrim • Grantham  
[www.ulh.nhs.uk](http://www.ulh.nhs.uk)

For further information please visit the website or  
contact: 01522 573945

## Changes in your breathing

- Irritation of the lining of the lungs can be caused by infection or airway disease.
- Irritation can cause an increase in phlegm volume and thickness which can make it difficult to clear.
- Inflammation of the airways can make them smaller and reduced size can increase the chance of blockage from phlegm.
- Blockage reduces airway effectiveness and can increase shortness of breath. To avoid this, it is important to try and clear sputum by reducing its thickness and using techniques that will help you remove phlegm from the airways.

This leaflet explains how best to do this.

## Breathing exercises

Your physiotherapist will listen to your chest to assess if you would benefit from breathing exercises. These will assist you if you are struggling to clear phlegm.

Breathing exercises will:

- Slow down the rate of breathing
- Keep the airway open for longer to expel trapped air
- Improve gas exchange to remove carbon dioxide

If you do not understand this (please see diagram overleaf for explanation), please ask your physiotherapist to explain.

## Changing position

The British Thoracic Society (leading lung specialists) recommend movement as top priority when a chest develops excessive phlegm.

### Why?

- Activity increases your depth of breathing allowing the phlegm to move up through the airways.
- Change in position, such as standing, turning or sitting upright will promote a change in phlegm position, making it easier to cough and clear.

Your physiotherapist can identify a good position for clearance by listening to your chest. Completing standing or chair exercises will both improve airway clearance and improve overall strength.

## Additional techniques

### Manual techniques

Your physiotherapist can apply techniques to the chest wall to help loosen phlegm in the lungs.

- Percussion: The physio will position you in a way that will allow concentration on the area with sputum retention that is stuck. They will cup their hands and apply a tapping technique while you breathe slow, controlled breaths. Coughing will clear the phlegm.
- Vibrations: As before, you will be positioned, but these are small shaking movements as you breathe out.

These techniques are not always required and your physiotherapist will make the decision based on your individual symptoms. Likewise, there are other options your physiotherapist