

Active cycle of breathing technique

This leaflet is designed to provide you with a breathing technique to help clear your airway.

General Rules

- Try to drink plenty of fluids to keep your phlegm less sticky
- Try to maintain a good breathing pattern with relaxed shoulders and neck
- Try to breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth
- Breathing out should be slow like “sighing out” to minimise any wheezing

Follow these steps for the cycle:

- Relaxed abdominal breathing for a minimum of 15 seconds
- Rest one hand on your abdomen, keep shoulders and upper chest relaxed and allow your hand to rise gently as you breath in (if you imagine air filling the abdomen like a balloon this may help)
- Sigh out gently
- Ensure shoulders remain relaxed
- Over a few seconds, gradually increase depth of breathing while maintaining relaxation
- A hormone called adrenaline is released into the blood stream which causes physical responses or sensations.

Relaxed abdominal breathing is an essential part of the cycle to allow rest.

Deep Breathing Exercises

- Take three to four deep breaths in, allowing the lower chest to expand
- Try to ensure neck and shoulders remain relaxed
- You may be advised to hold the air in for three seconds
- You may be advised to take three sniffs now to help expand your lungs fully
- Let the air out gently.

Forced expiration technique/huff:

- One of two huffs combined with relaxed abdominal breathing
- Take a half breath in and blow air out steadily through an open mouth as if you were steaming up a mirror
- Follow this with relaxed abdominal breathing.
- Repeat. (turn overleaf)
- As phlegm moves into larger airways take a deep breath in and ‘huff’ air out again through an open mouth
- Repeat cycle until your chest is clear or as advised by your physiotherapist

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The St Helena Hospice breathlessness clinic is run by a registered specialist nurse, an occupational therapist and a physiotherapist.

It is usual for patients to attend the clinic for up to four sessions, during which you will meet with the most appropriate health professional to work on your individual goals.

Please visit sthelenahospice.org.uk/rehabilitation for more information or call 01206 845 566.

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