



Information for You from Your Health Care Team

Cough Methods

Being able to cough is a natural reflex that forces air out and clears secretions from the airways. Removing secretions that may build up and collect in your lungs will help prevent further problems such as pneumonia. If you are unable to cough normally and need help clearing your airways, a directed cough or huff cough method may help you. Your respiratory therapist will help you to learn and perform these methods.

Directed Cough

- For best results, you should be in a sitting position.
- Your shoulders should be curled forward, with your arms at your side.
- Your feet should be firmly placed on the floor for support.
- Breathe out, as completely as possible, and then take a deep breath.
- Close your airway, holding your breath for a second.
- Cough using your arms and hands on your stomach to help force the air from your lungs as fast as possible.
- Repeat this process 3 to 5 times and as needed throughout the day to clear secretions from your lungs.

Huff Cough

- In the sitting position as above, begin by breathing out normally.
- Take a deep breath, and with as much force as possible, blow all the air out of your lungs.
- Repeat this method for 2 breaths, followed by 3 to 4 deep breaths; then relax.
- Repeat this method as needed throughout the day.

Note: Drinking plenty of water and fluids will help thin secretions and assist secretion removal. In addition, sitting up in a chair or walking will help.

Deep Breathing Exercisers

Further breathing exercisers may be prescribed by your doctor and taught to you by your nurse or respiratory therapist. These deep breathing exercises will help keep your lungs open to improve breathing. Take 10 to 15 deep breaths in a row every hour while you are awake or as instructed by your nurse or respiratory therapist.

References: Egan's Fundamentals of Respiratory Care, 7th Ed., 2003
AARC Clinical Practice Guidelines

Speak up if you have any questions or concerns

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