

Active Cycle Breathing Technique (ACBT)

ACBT will help clear secretions like sputum.
Sputum is mucus mixed with saliva (spit).

There are 3 steps in ACBT:

1. Breathing control
2. Deep breathing exercises
3. Huffing

1. Breathing control

Your airways are very sensitive and can feel tight and wheezy, especially after coughing or when you are short of breath. Breathing control is used to relax the airways and help with these symptoms.

- ☐ Place one hand on your stomach and let your shoulders drop down.
- ☐ Breathe quietly and gently. As you breathe in, your stomach should rise slightly. It should fall as you breathe out – don't force the air out.

Continue until your breathing feels relaxed and under control. This may be only 3 or 4 breaths, or more if you are feeling short of breath.

2. Deep breathing exercises

Deep breathing helps air move from behind the sputum that is stuck in your airways.

- ☐ Relax your upper chest.
- ☐ Breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose.
- ☐ Hold your breath for 2 to 3 seconds.
- ☐ Breathe out gently through pursed lips until your lungs are empty – don't force the air out.

Repeat 3 to 4 times. If you feel lightheaded at any time, go back to doing the breathing control steps above before moving on.

3. Huffing

Huffing moves sputum from the small airways to the larger airways, where it can be removed by coughing. Coughing by itself does not get sputum out from the small airways. Huffing is usually done 2 to 3 times in one breath.

- ☐ Take a medium-sized breath in.
- ☐ Breathe out forcefully by squeezing your stomach muscles while keeping your mouth and throat open. Imagine you are trying to fog up a window.

Active Cycle Breathing Technique Summary

Do the ACBT steps for _____ minutes, _____ times per day.

1 Breathing control (_____ breaths)

2 Deep breathing exercises (_____ breaths)

3 Huffing (_____ times)

Repeat steps 1, 2, and 3 for _____ cycles.

4 Cough 2 times.

If you can't clear sputum with 2 coughs, repeat steps 1 to 4.

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