

Active Cycle of Breathing Technique

A Patients Guide

What is it?

Active Cycle of Breathing Technique (ACBT) is a simple pattern of breathing exercises that can be useful to help clear your chest by loosening and moving sputum from your airways.

Why do we do it?

It is important to remove sputum from your lungs to help you breathe more easily, prevent chest infections and reduce bouts of coughing. The exercises consist of breathing control, deep breathing and huffing performed in a cycle until your chest feels clear.

How do I begin?

Choose a comfortable position, or complete in the positions indicated by your Physiotherapist. Try to remain relaxed.

The Active Cycle of Breathing Technique

Stage 1: Breathing Control

- Breathing gently using as little effort as possible
- Rest a hand on your stomach and relax your shoulders
- Breathe in and out quietly and gently, through your nose if possible
- It is important to do this in between the more active exercises of ACBT as it allows your airways to relax

Stage 2: Deep Breathing

- Breathe in through your nose slowly and deeply, keeping your shoulders and chest relaxed.
- Hold the breath for 2-3 seconds.
- Breathe out gently through your mouth, letting the air come out in its own time.
- Repeat this 2-3 times.

Repeat Breathing Control (stage 3)times

Repeat Deep Breathing (stage 2)times

Huffing

- Breathe out (exhaling) through an open mouth and throat and not coughing
- Squeezing air out through your open throat and mouth as if steaming up a mirror
- Do not force the air out so much that you hear a wheeze
- Small huff
 - Small to medium breath in
 - Huff air out until lungs feel quite empty
- Big short huff
 - When sputum is higher up in your chest and nearly ready to come out use this huff
 - Take a deep breath in and huff the air out quickly
- Always follow huffing by **breathing control (Stage 1 see above)**

Coughing

Original Author Nina Holden Reviewing Author Laura Grimsey Senior Physiotherapist
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- If you can clear your sputum (phlegm) by huffing then you do not need to cough
- Only cough if sputum (phlegm) can be cleared easily
- If you feel there is sputum (phlegm) ready to clear easily take a deep breath in and only cough.
- After 1 or 2 coughs, return to the beginning of the cycle with **breathing control** (Stage 1 see above).
- Coughing can be tiring so try and avoid bouts of coughing

Putting it together to form a 'cycle'

Repeat the cycle until you feel your huff or cough is not producing any sputum (phlegm) or for up to 20 minutes.

Personalised treatment plan for _____

Signed by: _____ Print Name and Designation _____

Date(dd/mm/yyyy): _____

If you have any concerns please call: Physiotherapy Department on 01603 286990
(Mon to Fri 8.30-4.30)

