

Active Cycle of Breathing (ACBT)

Information for patients, parents and carers

What does it do?

Looking after your chest and keeping your lungs healthy is extremely important. The following exercises, known as active cycle of breathing (ACBT) are one way to help you to clear sputum from your chest.

ACBT is a set of breathing exercises that loosens and moves the sputum from your airways. ACBT works by expanding your lungs more effectively, allowing air to get behind any secretions you may have, pushing them up your airways towards your mouth.

How do I do it?

The technique uses a combination of breathing, huffs and coughs as instructed below:

- Start with a period of relaxed breathing, where your upper chest should remain relaxed with most of the movement occurring in the lower chest. Usually about 1 minute.
- Take a slow deep breath in, at the end of the breath in you should hold the breath for a few seconds, then relax as you breathe out. Repeat this 3 – 5 times.
- This should be followed by a medium breath, with a forced but not violent breath out (huff), as if you are trying to steam up a mirror.

Finally you should try as big a cough as you can.



What position should I be in for ACBT?

The best position for you to do the ACBT in will depend on your medical condition and how well it works for you.

Your physiotherapist will advise you on the best position for you. Whatever position you use make sure you are comfortable, well supported and relaxed.

When should I do my breathing exercises?

You should do your exercises when it is easiest for you to move the sputum from your chest, or if you feel sputum has built up in your lungs. When you are well you may need to do ACBT only once or twice a day. When you have more sputum, you may need to do it more often.

Contact information

If you have any concerns, contact:

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