

# Airway clearance techniques

Community Respiratory Team



Cambridge, Doddington, Huntingdon and Peterborough 2018



*Pride in our older people's and adult community services*

# Active Cycle of Breathing Technique

The Active Cycle of Breathing Technique (ACBT) is designed to assist you with clearing your chest of secretions and helping relieve symptoms such as breathlessness and wheeze. The cycle consists of three different types of breathing:

## **Breathing control**

This is described as breathing gently, using as little effort as possible. This is essential to do in-between the more active parts of the cycle as it allows your airways to relax.

Breathe in and out gently through your nose if you can but if you cannot breathe through your mouth instead.

Try to let go of any tension in your body with each breath out.

Try to gradually make the breaths slower

## **Deep breathing**

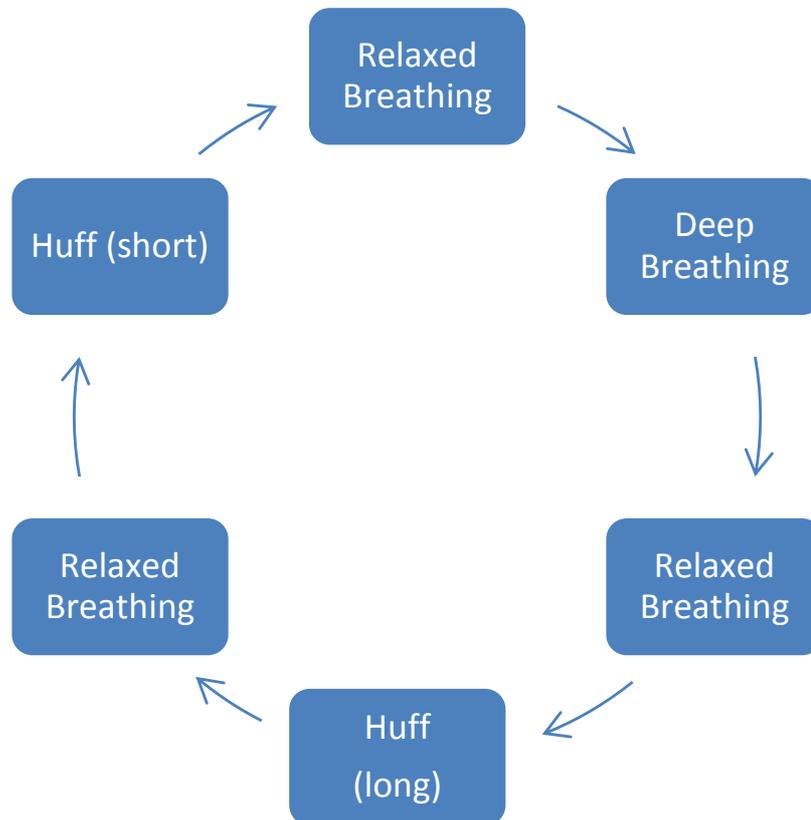
Take a long, slow, deep breath in, through your nose if you can. Breathe out gently and relaxed, like a sigh. Some people find it helpful to hold their breath for about 2-3 seconds at the end of the breath in, before breathing out.

## **Huffing**

A huff is exhaling through an open mouth and throat instead of coughing. It helps move sputum up your airways so that you can clear it in a controlled way. To 'huff' you squeeze the air quickly from your lungs, out through your open mouth and throat, as if you were trying to mist up a mirror or your glasses. Use your tummy muscles to squeeze the air, but do not force it so much that you cause wheezing or tightness.

The small-long huff - this moves sputum from low down in your chest. Take a small to medium breath in and then huff (as described above)

The big-short huff - this moves sputum from higher up in your chest, so use this when the sputum is ready to come out and not before. Take a deep breath in and then huff the air out quickly.



### How often?

When you are well, 1-2 times per day is enough.

When you are unwell and producing more sputum, you will need to possibly do shorter but more frequent sessions throughout the day.

### When should I do my breathing exercises?

We suggest on waking and before going to bed are good times. If you are feeling more breathless or feel you have sputum that has built up at other time periods this is a good time to do it.

### How long should I do ACBT for?

The exercises should take no longer than 10-15 minutes or ideally until your chest feels clear of sputum.

### What position should I do ACBT in?

Acapella/flutter

Yes/no

Number of breaths: \_\_\_\_\_

# Contact details and working hours

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Mon – Fri 8am – 6pm

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Our aim is to help you to manage your respiratory disease as well as possible. We can do this by helping you to understand your treatment, use your inhalers effectively, and manage your symptoms appropriately.

In an emergency please contact your GP or the emergency services on 111

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## Patient Advice and Liaison Service

For information about CPFT services or to raise an issue, contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on Free phone 0800 376 0775, or e-mail [pals@cpft.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@cpft.nhs.uk)

## Out-of-hours service for CPFT mental health service users

Contact Lifeline on **0808 808 2121**  
7pm-11pm  
365 days a year

If you require this information in another format such as braille, large print or another language, please let us know.