

# 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 breathless. Breathing control is used to relax the airways and help with these symptoms.

- Rest 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.

How long you spend doing breathing control will depend on how breathless you feel. Three or 4 breaths may be enough when you are well. More than 3 or 4 breaths will be needed if you are breathless because you have a flare up.

## 2. Deep breathing exercises

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

- Relax your upper chest.
- Breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose.
- Breathe out gently through pursed lips until your lungs are empty – don't force the air out.

Deep breathing is usually repeated 3 to 4 times. If you feel lightheaded, go back to breathing control (relaxed breathing).

## 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 small airways. Huffing is usually completed 2 to 3 times in one breath.

- Take a medium-sized breath in.
- Let the breath out by squeezing your stomach muscles while keeping your mouth and throat open. This is the same way you would 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 these steps again.

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