

Physiotherapy contact numbers

Angus Community Telephone : 01241 822591

Dundee Community Telephone : 01382 425665

Ninewells Hospital Telephone : 01382 632628

Perth Royal Infirmary Telephone : 01738 473702

Other sources of information

- British Lung Foundation/Breathe Easy Clubs
- Chest Heart and Stroke Society
- British Thoracic Society

Useful website for further information and demonstrations

- <http://www.mylungsmylife.org>
- <http://www.bronchiectasis.scot>
- <http://www.lvingitup.scot>

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Academy Medical Centre

Patient Information Leaflet No 14

*Clearing phlegm from
your lungs*



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The aim of this leaflet is to provide advice on how to Clear phlegm from you lungs. It is important that phlegm does not stay in your lungs as it can damage the lining of the lungs and it may cause a chest infection.

Breathing techniques

Coughing only shifts phlegm from your upper airways. If you have phlegm deep in your lungs it can be very difficult to clear it with coughing.

Try the following technique instead

2 – 3 big breaths
(To get air behind the phlegm)



4 – 5 relaxed breaths



2 – 3 big breaths



4 – 5 relaxed breaths



2 – 3 huffs

This is the type of breath you would use to steam up glass
Perform with an open and relaxed mouth and throat.
Huffs move phlegm up through the lungs.



2 – 3 relaxed breaths

1 – 2 coughs

Repeat this sequence as often as needed until phlegm is cleared, but always allow time for relaxed breathing in between. Stop if you become tired or if your chest becomes tight.

Perform this technique in the morning and whenever you have phlegm in your lungs. If you have an infection and more phlegm you should increase how often you do the technique.

Exercise and physical activity

Exercise can be very effective at clearing phlegm from y Our lungs as it makes you breathe deeply. Try any of the following:

1. Going for a walk
2. Climbing stairs
3. Marching on the spot
4. Punching the air with your arms 10 times
5. Anything else that gets you out of breath

Fluids

If you are dehydrated the phlegm in your lungs becomes sticky and can be difficult to cough up. You should drink around 6 – 8 glasses of water a day. If you dislike drinking water try adding diluting juice to flavour the water

Avoid repeated coughing

Repeated coughing can be tiring and can irritate the airways. Try to avoid coughing fits by sipping cold water, or swallowing and then performing the breathing exercise to clear the phlegm.

What to do if you have an infection

The earlier an infection is caught the easier it is to treat.

If you are unwell with a chest infection you may become breathless and you may have more phlegm in your lungs.

To help to clear this, try the following:

1. Perform the breathing exercise whenever you have phlegm in your lungs. This may be as often as every hour when you are awake.
2. Drink even more water than usual to keep the phlegm moist .