

The Active Cycle of Breathing Technique

St Elizabeth
Hospice

Therapy Team

The active cycle of breathing is designed to clear secretions with minimal effort. It comprises three parts:

1) Relaxed breathing

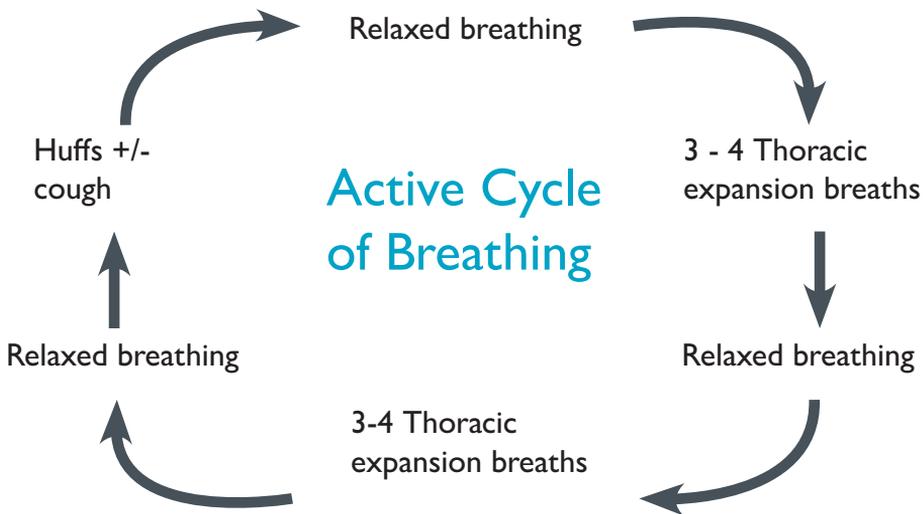
Slow rhythmical breathing (10-12 breaths/minute). Your stomach should rise as you breathe IN and relax/flatten as you breathe OUT. Your shoulders and neck should be relaxed and your upper chest should not move. Place your hand on your stomach to feel it rise and fall.

2) Thoracic expansion exercises

Three or four deep breaths (feeling the air reach the bottom of your lungs), holding the breath in for 3 – 5 seconds, whilst keeping your shoulders relaxed. Expiration should be gentle and relaxed. This gets air down to the bottom of your lungs and helps to move the phlegm.

3) Huff or forced expiration

Take a deep breath in followed by a forceful breath out, using your tummy muscles (it is like steaming up a mirror with your mouth open). If you feel phlegm at the back of the throat you can cough, if not, repeat the whole cycle.



By doing this breathing technique you should not have to cough as much to clear your lungs. You should not feel so exhausted, and your chest should not get so sore.

Drink plenty of fluids as this will help keep your sputum less sticky. Try to exercise regularly as this helps to clear phlegm.

