

Information for patients and visitors

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# Physiotherapy: Breath Stacking Technique

**Respiratory Physiotherapy  
Community & Therapy Services**

**This leaflet has been designed to explain the benefits of the treatment activity you have been taught, act as a reminder of technique and who to contact with any questions.**



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## Introduction

You have recently been seen by the Physiotherapist and taught techniques to help manage your condition. This leaflet is designed to remind you of the correct technique and any personalised advice given during the session.

## Breathing Stacking

### What is breathing stacking?

Breathing stacking is a breathing exercise to help improve and maintain the size of breath you are able to take and can be used regularly to help you clear mucus from your chest (secretion clearance). It can also be used to help improve the strength of your cough and voice.

It is mainly used for people with weak breathing muscles which makes breathing and coughing difficult. Patients with neuromuscular diseases often have weakness of their breathing (respiratory) muscles which affects how well the respiratory system works. It is also used for people with bone or structural problems which cause a small / altered chest shape making coughing difficult.

### Benefits

- Improve depth of breathing
- Aids secretion clearance
- Helps keep rib cage mobile / flexible
- Stretches respiratory muscles
- Improves cough strength and effectiveness
- Improves voice

## Risks

There are no risks.

## Alternatives

There are no alternatives.

## Technique

- Sit upright in a comfortable position
- Take a deep breath in and hold it
- Try to take another deep breath in on top of the previous breath
- Aim to take another 1-3 breaths in the same way (3-5 breaths in total)
- Breathe out or cough
- Repeat this process 3-5 times

### How often should I do it?

2-3 times a day but can be completed more often if needed.

### When should I not use it?

- Within an hour of eating or drinking / or PEG feed
- If you have chest pain or blood in your phlegm

## Reference Section

Physiotherapy Guideline The Joint British Thoracic Society / Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Respiratory Care Guidelines for the Physiotherapy Management of the Adult, Medical, Spontaneously Breathing Patient. May 2009 Thorax: Vol 64, Supplement 1.

M Toussaint et al. Limits of Effective Cough-Augmentation Techniques in Patients with Neuromuscular Disease Respiratory Care 2009; 54 (3): 359-366.

# Information for patients and visitors

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Motor Neurone Disease. 2016 NICE  
Guideline NG42.

## Contact Details for Further Information

Respiratory Team, Physiotherapy  
Department, Diana Princess of Wales  
Hospital, Grimsby  
01472 875276

Respiratory Team, Physiotherapy  
Department, Scunthorpe General Hospital  
01724 290010

## Concerns and Queries

If you have any concerns / queries about any  
of the services offered by the Trust, in the  
first instance, please speak to the person  
providing your care.

### For Diana, Princess of Wales Hospital

Alternatively you can contact the Patient  
Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on  
(01472) 875403 or at the PALS office which  
is situated near the main entrance.

### For Scunthorpe General Hospital

Alternatively you can contact the Patient  
Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on  
(01724) 290132 or at the PALS office which  
situated on C Floor.

Alternatively you can email:  
[nlg-tr.PALS@nhs.net](mailto:nlg-tr.PALS@nhs.net)

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