

Appendix H: Secretion Clearance Techniques – How to Teach Secretion Clearance

Secretion clearance consists of deep breathing, controlled coughing and huffing.

Deep breathing: Do deep breathing exercises 4 to 5 times a day, sitting or standing.

- Relax your shoulders.
- Take a deep breath in through your nose.
- Breathe out slowly through your nose.
- Breathe out longer than you breathe in.
Count to 1 when you breathe in.
Count to 3 when you breathe out.
- Repeat 5 deep breaths as above and rest.
- Try 5 more deep breaths in and out and rest.

Try blowing the air out through pursed-lips. Shape your lips like you are going to whistle, then blow out slowly. This will help you breathe easier.

Controlled Coughing Controlled coughing should be done after each set of breathing exercises:

- Take a deep breath in.
- Cough deeply 2 times with your mouth slightly open.
- Follow each set of breathing exercises with 2 controlled coughs.

Huffing If it is hard for you to cough, try huffing:

- Take a medium breath in.
- Make a sound like “ha” to push the air out very fast with your mouth slightly open.
- Do this 3 to 4 times, and then cough.

Reprinted with permission: Paula Eyles, CNS, Patient Education, St. Joseph's Hospital.

Physiotherapy Department, St. Joseph's Hospital (1997). *Tender loving care for your lungs*. Hamilton, Ontario: St. Joseph's Hospital.