



# Stop cough exercise

---

In the 1950s Dr Konstantin Buteyko recognised that many people were not breathing properly. He noticed that many people were breathing through their mouth and kept clearing their throat, leading to dry, irritable coughing spasms. This ‘stop cough’ technique has been developed to help break the vicious cycle.

---

## At the first sign of a tickle

1. Put your hand over your mouth and **swallow** (keep your hand over your mouth throughout).
2. Take a small breath in and out, pinch your nose if you can.
3. Hold your breath for 5-10 counts.
4. Leave your hand over your mouth (and release nose if you are pinching it).
5. Breathe **small, careful breaths** through the nose for 30 seconds (all the time resisting the urge to cough).
6. Take a slow steady breath in and out of your nose.
7. Repeat the practice twice more or until the tickle has subsided.
8. **Note:** *Discontinue and seek medical advice if you have a worsening or productive cough – especially if you are coughing coloured mucus or if you think you have a chest infection.*

## Other useful tips:

- Nose breathe as much as possible.
- Frequent sipping of water. Carry a bottle of water around all the time.
- Swallow instead of coughing.
- Try sucking on ice cubes, boiled sweets, frozen grapes.

Department of Respiratory Medicine  
Level 2, South Block  
Royal Berkshire Hospital  
Telephone: 0118 322 8296  
Monday to Friday 8.00am – 4.00pm  
Email: [pulmonary.rehabilitation@royalberkshire.nhs.uk](mailto:pulmonary.rehabilitation@royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

To find out more about our Trust visit [www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

**Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.**

Department of Respiratory Medicine  
Reviewed: January 2024. Next review due: January 2026