



Breathing / blowing games

This leaflet is for children who have been advised to do chest physiotherapy as a treatment for their chest condition. It is aimed to help with participation in young children and toddlers to make chest physiotherapy sessions fun and help your child to learn how to clear their lungs of secretions.

Why do breathing games?

Breathing/ blowing games are designed to promote deep breaths and fill the lungs with air. The additional air can also get behind secretions and help move them out of the lungs.

They should be done 1-2 times per day, but your physiotherapist will advise on frequency and duration.

Eventually your child will learn to huff and cough and will be able to change their breathing independently for chest clearance sessions.

General exercise:

Once your child is able to walk, run and maintain their balance you should encourage physical activity such as jumping on a trampoline or a space hopper, running, climbing or playing wheelbarrows! Once they are old enough sporting activities should also be included as there is increasing evidence that physical activity not only improves and maintains healthy levels of fitness but helps to ventilate and clear the lungs of secretions too.

Physical exercise should be used in addition to physiotherapy and not as a replacement, as research shows that although exercise is an effective way of clearing secretions, alone it is not as good as physiotherapy techniques. It is really good if your child can do some physiotherapy exercises after general exercise.

Hydration is also very important to help prevent secretions drying out. It is important for them to drink regularly throughout the day, more so if they are exercising.

Breathing / blowing games ideas

- **Blowing bubbles:** Most children enjoy bubbles, and this encourages them to take a big breath in and blow gently through an 'O'-shaped mouth. Repeat three to four 'blows', as their technique improves, encourage your child to breathe out for longer, followed by a huff or cough.
- **Blowing onto a tissue:** Holding a tissue out in front of you ask your child to take a big breath in and blow onto the tissue to lift it up. If they are struggling, remove one or two ply-sheets. Repeat three to four times. As this gets easier, encourage them to keep the tissue up for as long as possible and blow all the way out.
- **Pom pom ball football with a straw:** This is a really easy and fun blowing game. You could also have blowing Olympics and have blowing races. Set up a football pitch with 2 goals, and use the straws to blow a cotton ball, pom pom or rolled up piece of paper into the goals or try and reach the end. You could also use targets and score points for bigger breaths

- **Bubble PEP:** Your child's physiotherapist will provide the "bubble pep" information sheet if indicated
- **Blow painting:** Place some spots of paint on a piece of paper and then ask your child to blow into a straw as close to the paint as possible. This should move the paint across the paper in different directions to make a picture. **Warning: this can get messy!**
- **Practice steaming up a mirror:** This is great practise for doing huffs to clear your child's chest as they get older. Simply get them to "huff" to steam up a mirror.
- **Transferring objects game:** Get your child to practise transferring objects from 1 place to another by taking a deep breathe to suck them onto the end of the straw and holding them while they're transferred somewhere else
- **Character launcher:** This really easy game can use the frogs or rockets from your physiotherapist, or any other character your child likes such as Peppa Pig or Minions. Print and colour 2 identical characters, tape them together leaving a hole in the base, insert a straw into the gap and blow to make them fly.
- **Blowing windmills, whistles and musical instruments:** Fun and interactive, blowing into musical instruments or making windmills spin can be a fun way to increase your child's blowing. These all need to be washed with warm, soapy after every use.
- **Huffing / coughing:** Your child should be encouraged to take deep breaths and cough on command from an early age. This will help to clear secretions from their chest. To huff, your child will take a forced breath out with their mouth open (similar to steaming the mirror). A peak flow tube can also be used to practice (your physiotherapist will give you one). Your child's lips need to be sealed around the tube and then encourage your child to breathe out quickly. These exercises often require a greater level of concentration, so will be taught when your child is able to cope with these.

Blowing game toys should never be shared with other children. They should be kept in a box away from their other toys marked 'physiotherapy' so that they are only brought out to play in your sessions. This way you can make sure that they stay clean.

Some toys/equipment can only be used once, for example a straw or a tissue. Others will need to be cleaned by washing them in warm soapy water, rinse with clean water and leave to dry naturally (some toys may come with alternative cleaning instructions, please follow these guidelines).

If you are experiencing any problems with these exercises please contact your physiotherapist on the contact details below.

Useful contact:

Dingley Physiotherapy: 0118 322 5248.

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

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

RBFT Paediatric Physiotherapy, March 2026. Next review due: March 2028.