



Stop cough exercises

This leaflet explains 'stop cough' techniques to help control coughing and improve your breathing. Your respiratory physiotherapist will explain and demonstrate them to you so you are comfortable doing them at home.

What is the 'stop cough' technique?

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 (smother) and swallow (keep your hand over your mouth throughout) and stop breathing for 5 seconds
2. Leave your hand over your mouth (and release nose if you are pinching it).
3. Breathe small, careful breaths through the nose for 30 seconds (all the time resisting the urge to cough).
4. Repeat the practice twice more or until the tickle has subsided.

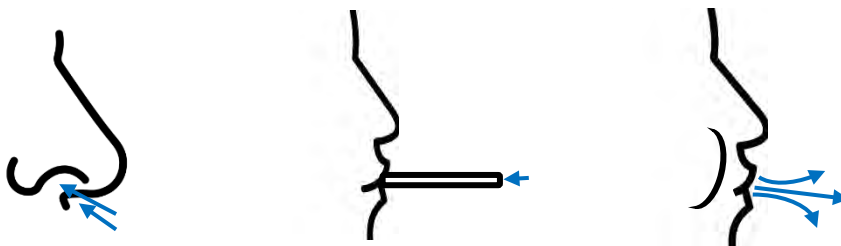
Note: Discontinue and seek medical advice if you have a worsening or productive cough – especially if you are coughing coloured mucus or if you think you have a chest infection.

Can't stop coughing? Try this [Buteyko breathing exercise](#) to reduce frequency and intensity of cough.

Other breathing techniques to help stop persistent, irritable coughs

Newer evidence suggests that the following can also help:

- **SNIFF** – inhaling (breathing in) air in through your **nose**
- **SUCK** – inhaling (breathing in) air in through your **mouth** or a straw
- **PUFF** – blowing air out through your **mouth** (like blowing out a candle)



Try the following 4 techniques:

- **SNIFF – PUFF – PUFF**
- **SUCK – PUFF – PUFF** (if nose blocked up)
- **SNIFF – VOICE** e.g. saying "Sssh", "Zzzzz"
- Via a straw: **SUCK – PUFF – PUFF**

Frequency:

- Do these exercises little and often throughout the day.
- Aim for 3 repetitions, 3 sets, 3-5 times a day.

Other useful tips:

1. Breathe through your nose as much as possible.
2. Frequently sip water. Carry a bottle of water around at all times.
3. Swallow instead of coughing.
4. Try sucking on ice cubes, boiled sweets, frozen grapes, chewing gum.
5. Stop smoking.
6. Steam inhalation.
7. Hydration – make sure you drink enough fluid every day.

Contact numbers

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

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

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