

# How to use an Aerobika® device to clear mucus from your airways

Department of Physiotherapy

Information for Patients

Produced: June 2025

Review: June 2028

Leaflet number: 1629 Version: 1

## What is the Aerobika®?

The Aerobika® is a device that helps improve breathing by creating gentle pressure and vibrations. This means that when you breathe out through the Aerobika®, you get pulsing pressure. This creates vibrations or a back and forth movement (oscillation) that helps to loosen the mucus in your airway. When your mucus is loose, it is easier to clear.

The Aerobika® device is made out of plastic. It has an outer shell that has an inner plastic valve cartridge. There is a black indicator on the front of the Aerobika® which changes how easy or difficult it is to breathe out through the device. Your physiotherapist will advise you on the number the arrow should be on for you.

The Aerobika® will become part of your respiratory physiotherapy to help clear the mucus (also called phlegm or sputum) from your airways.



## How does the Aerobika® work?

When you breathe out through the Aerobika®, air flows through the mouthpiece into the plastic valve cartridge. This moves the plastic flap and creates vibrations or oscillations. These oscillations will loosen up the mucus from your airways. This will help you to clear your mucus more effectively.

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit [www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk) for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals  
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact [InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)

## **Why do I need to clear mucus from my lungs or airways?**

When you have a problem with your lungs, your airways can make more mucus than normal.

Regularly clearing your mucus (also called airway clearance) improves the amount of air getting into your lungs. This helps you to breathe more easily.

Daily airway clearance can help to reduce how often you get a chest infection. It can also help to lower any uncontrolled coughing fits.

## **What happens if I do not clear the mucus from my lungs or airways?**

Mucus that is not cleared can:

- become infected and cause more damage to the lungs
- block your airways which can make your lungs not work as effectively
- make your breathing feel more difficult
- affect your ability to carry out normal daily activities

## **How does respiratory physiotherapy help?**

Respiratory physiotherapy uses techniques to help clear the mucus from your airways. It helps to loosen and move the mucus from all areas of your lungs.

It is much more effective and efficient compared to coughing alone.

There are many airway clearance techniques and your physiotherapist will help to select the best one for you.

It may take time to find the right technique for you.

Always remember not to force airway clearance. Make sure you have plenty of rest time when doing any technique.

## How do I use my Aerobika®?

Your physiotherapist will show you how to use the Aerobika®.

They will teach you how to set the black arrow at the right number for you.

They will tell you how often you should use it.

1. You can use the Aerobika® whilst sitting or lying down. Your physiotherapist will discuss the best position for you.
2. Close your lips around the mouthpiece. Make sure there are no gaps.
3. Keep your cheeks held in to maximise the vibration felt in your lungs.
4. Take a slightly bigger breath in through your nose and then blow out through your mouth with the Aerobika® actively but not forcefully.
5. Breathe out for about 3 to 5 seconds. Do this until you are still comfortable but **not** until your lungs feel completely empty.
6. You will feel vibrations in your lungs.
7. Try to avoid coughing straight away. Try to repeat more breaths.
8. You should aim to do 8 to 10 breaths through the Aerobika®, or the amount told to you by your physiotherapist.
9. Do 4 to 5 normal relaxed breaths without the Aerobika®.
10. Complete up to 3 huffs to move the mucus up to your throat and cough and clear when the mucus is ready. The huffing technique is like steaming a mirror with your mouth but to do it forcefully keeping your mouth wide open.
11. You should repeat all the above steps as many times as needed until you feel your lungs are clear.
12. Please go to page 5 to follow your personalised airway clearance plan.

## How do I look after my Aerobika®?

You should clean your Aerobika® after every use as follows:



1. Separate into its individual parts (your physiotherapist will show you how to do this).
2. Soak the Aerobika® fully covered with warm soapy water for 15 minutes. Stir it gently.
3. Rinse the parts with running warm water.
4. Shake off any water. Leave to dry completely on a clean surface before putting the pieces back together.

If you needed, you can disinfect your Aerobika® once a week:

1. Separate into individual parts.
2. Boil it in water for 5 minutes.
3. Take it out and let it cool. Let it air dry before putting it back together.

Please make sure there is enough water to entirely cover the Aerobika®. You must put a small rack at the bottom of the pot to stop the plastic parts from touching the bottom of the hot pot.

There are other options for disinfection found in the manufacturers leaflet. This leaflet comes with the device.

You must also check the condition of your Aerobika® regularly. If you feel there are any problems please contact your physiotherapist.

You have to replace your Aerobika® once every year. This is part of the manufacturers license.

## My personalised airway clearance plan

My technique:

How long to spend doing it and how often?

.....  
.....  
.....

How does this fit in with my inhalers or nebulisers?

.....  
.....  
.....

## What else can help?

- Find a time of the day when it is best for you to carry out your airway clearance.
- Find a time of the day when you have the most mucus to clear.
- Keep an eye on your fluid intake to avoid dehydration, especially during infections.
- Exercise helps your general health and can help you to clear mucus out of your lungs. Exercise should not replace airway clearance techniques.

It is **not recommended** to carry out airway clearance techniques when you are:

- tired
- in a hurry
- or straight after a meal

Remember that heavy uncontrolled coughing is exhausting and can irritate your lungs. Your physiotherapist can teach you cough control strategies if this is a problem for you.

## What problems could I have with my technique?

**Please contact your physiotherapist for advice if:**

- you have any problems doing your treatment
- it causes blood in your mucus (haemoptysis)
- you have uncontrollable cough
- your cough increases but it is not clearing the mucus
- your lung symptoms changed

Your physiotherapist will review your airway clearance programme and change the treatment as needed.

## Summary

- It is important to clear mucus from your lungs and airways to reduce the risk of infections.
- Your physiotherapist will help you to decide how much treatment is needed and how often.
- Any airway clearance technique you perform should clear mucus with as little effort as possible to keep any unwanted wheeze, cough and breathlessness away.
- Airway clearance tries to help bring your mucus as high up the lungs as possible before you cough.
- The more you do these techniques you will find it easier to avoid coughing immediately at the first sign of mucus.
- When the lungs produce a lot of mucus, airway clearance exercise should be done at least 2 times a day and sometimes more often.
- Your physiotherapist will advise you on how to time your airway clearance with your inhalers or nebulisers.
- Mucus may continue to clear for a while after you have performed the technique.
- Remember to clean your Aerobika® after every use. You may disinfect it once a week.
- Please remember to bring your Aerobika® with you to your appointments and to the hospital. This so that the physiotherapist can check your technique.

Please contact your physiotherapist if you need any more advice or guidance.

