

# How to use bubble PEP to clear mucus from your airways

Department of Physiotherapy

Information for Patients

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## What is bubble PEP?

PEP stands for positive expiratory pressure. Bubble PEP is a way to help get rid of mucus from your lungs by blowing bubbles through water. A bubble PEP is a bottle filled with water and a long piece of tubing.



## How does bubble PEP work?

- When you breathe out through the tube in to the water, you cause a small amount of pressure to build up in your lungs.
- The pressure holds your airways open and helps more air in and out of your lungs.
- The vibrations caused by making the bubbles also help to loosen the mucus, making it easier to get rid of.
- The airflow helps to move the mucus out of your lungs and towards your top airways.
- When mucus is in your top airways, you can huff and cough it up.

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

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## Why do I need to use the bubble PEP?

If you have a problem with your lungs, there can be more mucus in your airway. If the mucus is not cleared with treatment, it can cause chest infections, damage to your airways, or make your breathing more difficult.

## How do I use the bubble PEP?

Your physiotherapist will tell you how to use the bubble PEP, and tell you when and how to do your treatment.

1. Wash your hands.
  2. Take your inhalers and/or nebulisers that you have been prescribed to help your airways before using bubble PEP.
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3. Fill a large clean plastic bottle (like 1 litre bottle/sterile water bottle given by your physiotherapist) with water between 10 to 14cm deep (between the top of the label and the uppermost ridge on sterile water bottle).
  4. Put the tubing between your teeth and close your lips, making sure there is a good seal.
  5. Take a slightly bigger than normal breath in through your nose.
  6. Hold your breath for \_\_\_\_\_ seconds.
  7. Blow out through the tubing, keeping your cheeks held in, as far as comfortable, making bubbles in the water for a couple of seconds.
  8. Repeat for \_\_\_\_\_ breaths.
  9. Do \_\_\_\_\_ huff(s).
  10. Do a strong cough. Try not to swallow your mucus, but spit it in to a tissue and throw it away.
  11. You should have a period of relaxed breathing in between each cycle before doing the next one.
  12. Repeat the steps above \_\_\_\_\_ times (cycles) when you are well, or \_\_\_\_\_ times (cycles) when you are unwell, or as many times as you need to until your chest feels clear.
  13. Take your inhalers and/or nebulisers that you have been prescribed after your airway clearance
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When you are well, complete your programme (above) \_\_\_\_\_ times a day.

When you are unwell, complete the programme (above) \_\_\_\_\_ times a day.

## What if I have problems using the bubble PEP?

If your medical condition has changed, please contact your physiotherapist before using bubble PEP again.

Stop using bubble PEP straightaway and contact your doctor if:

- you are out of breath when using bubble PEP
- you have sudden chest pain
- you become wheezy
- you notice blood (red flecks) in your mucus

## How do I look after the bubble PEP?

When not being used, take the tubing out of the bottle and keep the lid on.

The bottle should be washed daily in warm soapy water and left to air-dry with the lid off.

Boil water and let it become warm. Pour this water through the tubing and hang up from the middle to air-dry.

Your physiotherapist will tell you how often to change the bottle and tubing.

## Other Information

Try not to use bubble PEP straight after you have eaten a meal.

Use physical exercise as well as your bubble PEP treatment. Daily physical exercise will help clear your lungs and will keep your muscles and joints healthy.



## Contact details:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

If you do not know how to contact your physiotherapist, you can contact the receptionist and leave a message for the respiratory physiotherapy department at Glenfield on: **0116 258 3595**, Monday to Friday, 8.30am and 4.30pm.

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Previous reference:

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