

Blowing games to help your child clear their chest

Children's Physiotherapy

Information for Patients

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Introduction

This information has been given to you to help you encourage your child to do their chest clearance exercises.

The aim of these blowing games is to encourage your child to take bigger breaths and therefore change the way in which they normally breathe. This in turn will help to move and clear secretions from their chest in a fun way.

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

Blowing games ideas

Blowing bubbles:

Bubbles are available from most supermarkets and are a firm favorite with children. To make it effective your child should take a big deep breath and slowly blow out through an "O" shaped mouth. As your child gets better at blowing bubbles you should aim to get them to do longer breaths out, aiming for around 5 breaths followed by a huff or cough.

Blow football - 2 or more players:

Place a cotton wool ball in the centre of a table with two "goals" one at either end of the table. Each player is given a straw. The aim of the game is to blow the cotton wool ball into each others goal.

Blow football - 1 player only:

Have a single goal and score goals from a set distance. You need to aim for your child to take 6 to 10 breaths per goal and after each goal encourage them to do a huff or cough.

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or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

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To give feedback about this information sheet, contact InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

Blowing water bubbles:

Half fill a 1-litre bottle or jug with water (about 10cm of water). Place a straw or tubing into the jug and ask your child to blow out gently (to the count of 3 to 5 seconds) through the straw to make lots of bubbles. Aim to do 6 to 10 breaths before stopping to cough. Repeat the cycle for 5 to 10 minutes. To make this harder, use longer or wider straws.

If your child can definitely blow (rather than suck) through the straw, you can add a drop of fairy liquid to the water, to make the game more fun.

Blow painting:

Place a few spots of paint on a piece of paper and then ask your child to blow gently through the straw as close to the paper as possible.

Blo-pens:

These are a messy but fun blowing game. These games involve a special felt-tip pen that your child blows through while holding and moving the pen above a blank piece of paper. A picture will be created on the paper.

Blowing toys:

- Whistles, slide whistles, duck whistles
- Recorder
- Harmonica, panpipes
- Paper windmills
- Party hooters, ball blow

Your physiotherapist may issue your child with a blowing toy to encourage your child to do additional physiotherapy in a fun way. It is important to remember that these toys should not replace the formal physiotherapy session as recommended by your physiotherapist.

These toys are readily available in any reputable toy store; however be sure to only buy toys that comply with EU safety standards.

These blowing toys should not be shared with other children. They should be kept separate from your child's normal toys so that they are only brought out for physiotherapy time.

After use it is important that you wash them with warm soapy water, then rinse and shake off excess water. Allow to dry by placing on a clean paper towel and cover with a paper towel to keep dust free. To reduce the risk of infection we recommend that once a week, you sterilise the toys by either submerging the toy in boiling water for 10 minutes or place in steam steriliser.

Make sure the toy is completely dry and clean before it is used. Check for wear and tear i.e. excessive teeth marks or breakages. If the toy is damaged, please throw it away and replace with a new one.

Safety warnings

- Be careful when using water bubbles; there is a risk the child may suck up the water which may go down the wrong way causing your child to cough and choke.
- Beware toys with small pieces may be a potential choking hazard.
- Make sure your child is supervised by an adult whilst using these toys or techniques to keep them safe.

Huffing / Coughing

Your child should be encouraged to take deep breaths and cough on command as soon as they are able to. This will help to clear more secretions from their chest.

A huff is a technique where your child takes a forced breath out with their mouth open (lips in an "O" shape). This is similar to steaming up a mirror or a pair of glasses. It is important to keep trying until your child gets this technique right. A peak flow tube can be used in the beginning (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.

Once your child is able to do breathing exercises and is able to effectively huff/cough, more formal breathing techniques may be introduced to help clear their chest. These tend to require a greater level of concentration and therefore will be taught when it is best for your child to cope with these.

Try to make the physiotherapy sessions into a fun game that your child wants to play.

What to do if you have problems

If you have any problems with the exercises you should contact your physiotherapist on the number below or discuss the problem at your next appointment.

Leicester Royal Infirmary - Physiotherapy: 0116 258 5816

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