

Clearing your chest.

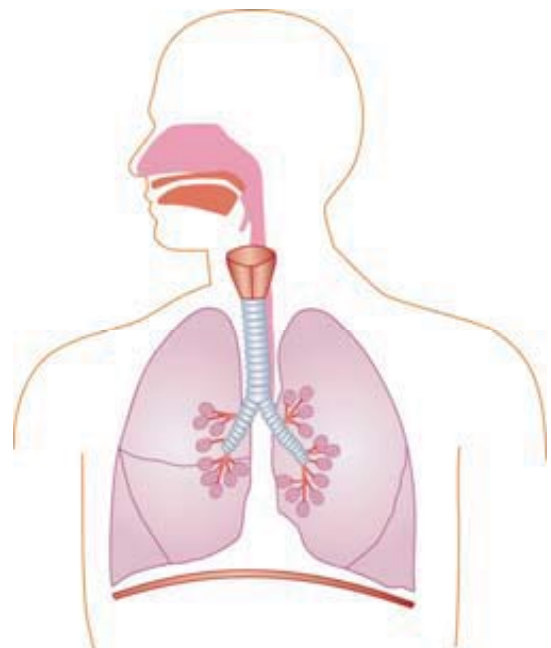
Sputum in your chest can make it harder to breathe. It can also provide a breeding ground for infections. It is important to keep your chest as clear as possible.

Coughing uses a lot of energy and can soon become an uncontrolled bout of coughing – this wastes energy and can make you very breathless.

‘Huffing’ technique

Huffing (Forced Expiratory Technique) is a more controlled way of clearing your chest and causes less breathlessness than coughing.

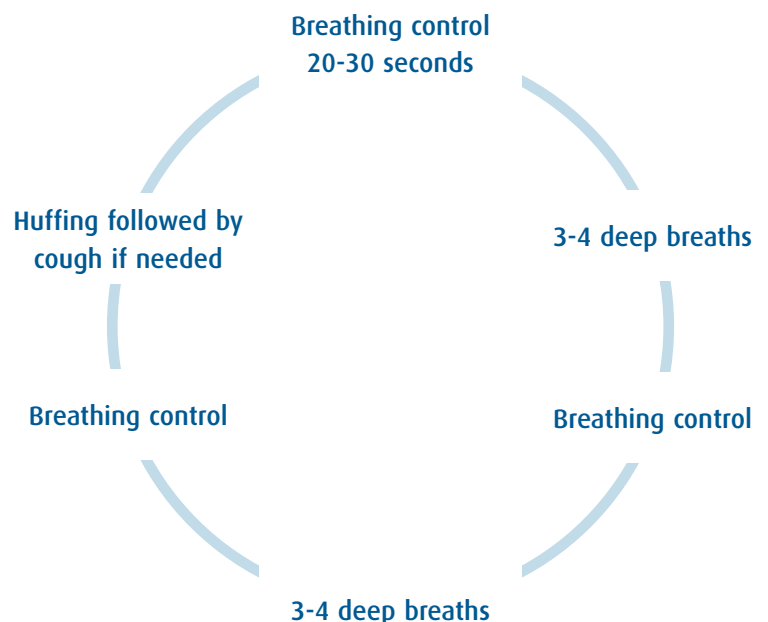
Huffing is exhaling in a short burst while keeping your mouth and throat open. Imagine trying to mist up a window or mirror.



Active Cycle of Breathing Technique (ACBT)

Huffing can be used as part of a breathing cycle to clear your chest.

1. Take several relaxed normal-sized breaths, keeping your shoulders and neck relaxed.
2. Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose 3 times.
3. Repeat steps 1 and 2.
4. One-two huffs.



Other tips

- To control a coughing fit, swallowing, breathing through your nose and pursed-lip breathing can be helpful.
- Drink plenty of fluid. If you are well hydrated your sputum will be looser and easier to clear.
- If you are prescribed a reliever (short acting bronchodilator) take it 10 minutes before you start ACBT chest clearance. The airways will then be opened up which makes it easier to move the sputum.
- Sputum can accumulate in the airways overnight. Try to practice ACBT each morning, 10 minutes after using your reliever inhaler or nebuliser.
- Use the chest clearance techniques as often as you need to throughout the day. Clearing your chest before going out can be helpful.
- If you have thick, sticky sputum that is still difficult to clear your GP may be able to prescribe you a tablet or syrup (a mucolytic) to help loosen the sputum.
- If you still find it difficult to move the sputum, there are some breathing devices available to buy which help loosen the sputum and make it easier to bring up.