

The purpose of this guide

We hope this guide will provide some useful guidelines for sufferers from Aspergillus related illnesses, their families and anyone who would like to know more about the impact of Chest Physiotherapy in Aspergillus conditions.

Nothing contained in this leaflet is intended to be any form of medical advice and must not be taken, or relied upon, as such. Individuals must seek all such advice personally in relation to their particular circumstances.

Chest Physiotherapy – What is it?

Chest Physiotherapy involves a group of techniques, aimed at assisting the removal from the lungs of excess secretions (or sputum, mucus, phlegm). It can be used to improve ventilation of the lungs, assist a cough and to re-educate breathing muscles.

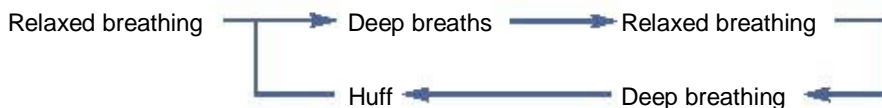
Why is this important with aspergillus conditions?

Some sufferers from aspergilloma, ABPA, etc. may find they have excess secretions, which may also be thicker and discoloured. Although medication can help, some people find they cannot remove these secretions by coughing alone. As these secretions make breathing more difficult, and can decrease the amount of oxygen available to the body, it is important to be able to remove them, which is where chest physiotherapy can help.

How is it performed?

One method involves a technique known as postural drainage, which uses gravity to assist the removal of secretions. There are many different positions, which correspond to different areas of the lungs, and should be used according to which area has the most secretions. Positions include sitting upright, side lying, and lying tipped head downwards.

Another breathing technique known as 'The Active Cycle of Breathing' may be employed, which is a combination of relaxed breathing, deep breaths and huffing (similar to trying to clear your throat), which creates altered pressures within the airways, helping to remove secretions. It is usually performed as follows;



Relaxed breathing is used to prevent your chest from becoming tight/wheezy, and to stop you from becoming too breathless. To perform it, rest one hand gently on your stomach and allow your shoulders to relax. Breathe gently at your own pace, let the air go as you breathe out – do not force it.

Deep breathing is used to move sputum by getting air behind it. Take a long slow deep breath in and then let the air go as you breathe out. Do no more than three deep breaths at a time, otherwise you may become dizzy or light headed. If you do feel breathless, return to relaxed breathing.

A guide to Chest Physiotherapy



Aspergillus fumigatus

Medical knowledge and opinion varies according to the extent and availability of research and differing assessments of such research by different practitioners.

Whilst the information contained in this leaflet has been compiled by the Aspergillus Trust from sources believed to be reliable, the Trust cannot guarantee the accuracy or completeness of such information and cannot accept any responsibility for any use of such information.

Update 2009: The Aspergillus Trust is now the Patient Advocates Group, part of the Fungal Research Trust. <http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/AspergillusCentreAdvocates/>

To contact us for further guidance, or if you would like to assist us in any way, please email: admin@aspergillus.org.uk

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Huffing is used to remove sputum from your chest. It is similar to using a peak flow meter, and is a forced breath out with your mouth open. To remove sputum from the bottom of your chest, take a moderate sized breath in and a long huff out. To remove sputum from the top of your chest take a large breath in and a short huff out. This may make you cough, but you should be able to clear your sputum with one or two coughs. If you feel that you will cough a lot, try to stop this by returning to relaxed breathing.

Repeat the cycle until your chest is clear.

Alternatively, percussion may be used, which involves someone patting (NOT hitting) appropriate areas of the chest, which in turn causes a vibration in the airways that can help to move secretions. This should only be performed by someone correctly instructed in the technique.

Other techniques may be applied if appropriate.

Please note, these techniques must be tailored to an individual's need. The advice of a chartered physiotherapist should be sought to provide a treatment plan that will be effective for your needs. This guide is in no way intended as a treatment plan.

How often should it be done?

This depends on the amount of secretions that are present in the lungs; for some people treatment may only need to be performed once a day, for others several times. Avoid physiotherapy immediately after meals or drinks.

If you feel you would benefit from chest physiotherapy, ask your respiratory consultant to make a referral, if appropriate.

What further help is available for sufferers?

Aspergillus related illnesses are long-term conditions, and can have a negative impact on an individual's quality of life. Although medication is available, help and advice are necessary to give further support to the sufferer.

- Aspergillus Advocates Group <http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/AspergillusCentreAdvocates/> Visit us online where you can register with us and find out more about the Fungal Research Trust and how you can help.
- Aspergillus Support Group is open to everyone, including those living outside the UK. This is a large active group supporting all kinds of aspergillosis: <http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/AspergillusSupport/>
- The Aspergillosis Patient Support webpages are very informative and are written for patients. <http://www.aspergillus.org.uk/newpatients>
- Other useful websites include:
www.doctorfungus.org
www.epa.gov/ebtpages/airindoormold.html