

Teaching airway clearance to your child

Making Physiotherapy fun

Paediatric Cystic Fibrosis (CF) Team



THE BASICS

How the lungs work

Each person has two lungs (left and right). The lungs are divided into different lobes. The purpose of the lungs is to transfer oxygen from the air we breathe into our blood. Our blood then transports the oxygen to the tissues and organs of our bodies, which need oxygen to function.

How CF affects the lungs

In CF the mucus produced by the lungs is stickier than normal which can make CF lungs more prone to infection. Infection in the lungs can also lead to inflammation (swelling) of the airways. Not all children are affected in the same way or to exactly the same degree. In order to keep your child's lungs healthy, it is important that we try to keep them free from infection.

To keep the lungs clear from infection it is important to complete regular airway clearance as well as exercise. We often use positive expiratory pressure (PEP) as children get older in the form of a PEP mask or other devices. PEP helps get air behind secretions in the lungs to enable more effective clearance.

To learn the best techniques to do this we can use a variety of blowing games. It is also really important to make physiotherapy FUN.

We have put together a few ideas to help you do this at home:

1. Teach your child how to blow by encouraging them to copy you e.g: when you blow on hot food to cool it down or if you take your child swimming show them how to blow bubbles in the water.
2. Keep a wipe clean box full of blowing games—things like wide bore straws, cotton wool balls, ping pong balls, windmills and bubble pots. Keep this safe and choose a particular point of the day to get it out and play games together or with siblings.
3. Use or make a pack of cards with your child with different activities on each card e.g.
 - 10 star jumps,
 - Blow 5 cotton wool ball goals,
 - Huff 3 times on a window pane, run on the spot for a minute.
 - Play snap or pick a card till all the cards are gone.
4. Practice huffing using a small tube or by making an 'O' shape with your fingers.
5. Make up songs that involve blowing bubbles or blowing things away and sing together.

Spend at least 20 minutes a day on these activities.

If possible try to do some exercise and blowing games in each session.

Aim to make physiotherapy an enjoyable part of the day you spend together.

Games ideas:

Blow football: Set up a goal at each end of a table. Use a ping pong ball or cotton wool ball as the football and wide bore straws to blow the 'football' to score goals.

Tower tornado: Build a tower of plastic cups and use a wide bore straw to blow the tower down in as few a breaths as possible.

Shepherding sheep: Make a flock of sheep using cotton wool balls and a pen to herd them in to. Use straws to blow the sheep into a pen.

Windmills: See who can blow the windmill the fastest and for the long-est.

Blow Pens: Use blow pens to make patterns on paper bring them in to show us if you want.

Blowing bubbles in water: Start with a small cup and straw and see how many bubbles they can blow. Then move on to a bigger bowl maybe with some food colouring and bigger straws.

- Try making blowing games part of a song for example 'The grand old Duke of York' encourage your child to march by marching with them and as you get to the top of the hill pretend to blow a trumpet 10 times.
- You know your child best so try songs they love.
- Use reward charts or reward apps to help if this appeals to your child.

Let us know what other games you can come up with.....

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