

Breathing Exercises for Increasing Lung Function and Capacity

There are many breathing exercises you can do which can help you to relax and destress, but also improve your lung function, particularly if you've suffered from a recent respiratory illness. The following exercises are designed to help you to increase your lung function and capacity.

Where possible dedicate 10 minutes, preferably twice a day, but once is better than nothing, and particularly anytime you're are feeling anxious, stressed or overwhelmed.

Caution: Breathing exercises can make some people dizzy or lightheaded, especially if they are new to you. So, always work safely by lying down or sitting while you perform the exercises. Also take it slowly, do 1-2 exercises at a time initially and perform them 2-3 times through the day.

1. Lions Breath

This exercise is good for strengthening the diaphragm.

- Take a deep breath in through the nose
- As you exhale open your mouth and push your tongue out as far as possible.
- Repeat 8 times

2. Forced Exhalation

This is a good exercise to strengthen your diaphragm and improve your deep breathing mechanics.

- Breathe in through your nose pushing your belly up and out
- Then open your mouth and breathe out hard in a short sharp blow. Remember to pull your stomach in as the same time as you exhale.
- Repeat 8 times.

3. Huff Cough

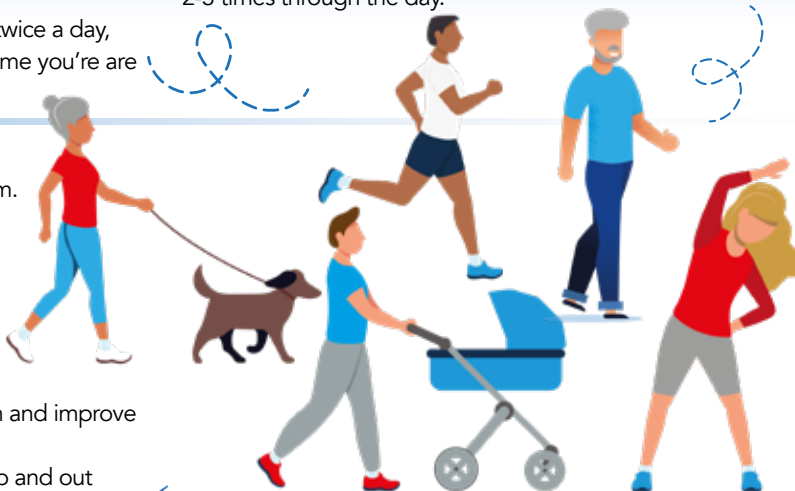
This is a progression from forced exhalation and is more for someone who has been ill or has experienced a build-up of mucus in their chest. The huff cough is a breathing exercise designed to help you cough up mucus effectively without making you feel too tired. It should be less tiring than a traditional cough, and it can keep you from feeling worn out when coughing up mucus.

- Place yourself in a comfortable seated position. Inhale through your mouth, slightly deeper than you would when taking a normal breath.
- Activate your stomach muscles to blow the air out in 3 even breaths while making the sounds "ha, ha, ha." Imagine you are blowing onto a mirror to cause it to steam.
- Try this 3 times as it should elicit a productive cough and relieve you of any mucus. This can be done anytime during the day when you feel there is mucus build-up.

4. Forced Inhalation

This is a good exercise for strengthening your diaphragm and improving your deep breathing mechanics.

- Open your mouth and take a fast hard breath in. Don't forget to push your stomach out as you breathe in
- Slowly relax breathing out
- Repeat 8 times



FUN GAMES TO IMPROVE YOUR LUNG FUNCTION

1 Keep the feather (or tissue if you don't have a feather) floating

This game encourages breath control and endurance.

2 Blow Bubbles

Everything you were told not to do as a kid – blow bubbles in your water, juice or milkshake! Slow controlled exhalation (blowing out) is excellent for strengthening your lungs and diaphragm.

3 Races

Have a straw and a small light ball (or anything, even a pea, that will be light enough to be blown across a table). Using your breath by blowing out through the straw move the small ball/object across the table. You can race with a family member!

4 Get Creative

This may be a fun game if you have kids or grandchildren and some paint (even some water with food colouring will work). Drop a blob of paint on some card and spread it around by blowing through a straw.

5 Keep the Ball Bobbing

See how long you can keep the ball floating in air. This requires breath control and a good volume of air. Time yourself or challenge others and see your improvement. All you need is a straw, ping pong ball or a small ball made from scrunched up paper and a funnel made from paper wrapped around the end of the straw or a cut-off soda bottle.

The information contained in this article is intended as general guidance and information only and should not be relied upon as a basis for planning individual medical care or as a substitute for specialist medical advice in each individual case. ©Co-Kinetic 2020