



**Misericordia Community Hospital
Respiratory Therapy**

ASSISTED COUGH - CLIENT WITH CAREGIVER

Helping the Cough Mechanism

WHY?

- ❖ Prevent and clear phlegm from collecting in your lungs.
- ❖ Improve your cough.
- ❖ Help you have fewer infections in your lungs.

WHEN?

- ❖ Done at least once every day.
- ❖ If phlegm is present, treatment may be performed more often.
- ❖ Best done before meals or at bedtime.

WHAT?

- ❖ A method using a caregiver to help you clear the phlegm from your lungs.

HOW?

Client position:

1. Sit or lie flat.
2. If sitting, make sure you are as far back in the chair as possible.
3. If sitting in wheelchair, it must be in the locked position against a wall so you do not tip over.
4. Make sure your back and neck are supported.
5. You may have to place a rolled towel or pillow just below your shoulder blades to straighten your back.
6. Make sure your head is in neutral position, that is, not tipped forward and not extended back.

HELPFUL HINT

Before starting, explain to your caregiver how to perform your assisted cough.

When doing the assisted cough, the pressure should be firm, quick and coordinated with the cough.

WARNING

If you have to do the assisted cough to the point of fatigue, notify your physician. You may have an infection.

You will find one of the following hand positions work better:

ABDOMINAL THRUST HAND POSITION: (most effective method)

1. Breathe in as deeply as possible.
2. Hold your breath until the caregiver's hands are positioned.
3. The caregiver places index fingers on your hip bones.
4. He/she then slides their thumbs towards your belly button.
5. The caregiver places the heel of one hand, one inch above your belly button with their fingers pointed towards your chest.
6. He / she spreads their fingers apart.
7. The caregiver places their other hand over the first one and interlocks their fingers making sure fingers do not touch your chest.
8. The elbows are kept straight.
9. Signal your caregiver when you are ready to cough.
10. Pressure is applied inward and upward a split second before you cough.
11. It is best to cough up, but if unable to, you may swallow or ask your caregiver to suction phlegm.
12. This is repeated until you feel relief.

CAUTION:

Do not use abdominal thrusts if any of the following applies to you:

- ❖ Pregnancy
- ❖ Abdominal aneurysm
- ❖ Recent abdominal surgery
- ❖ A bleeding ulcer
- ❖ Obesity
- ❖ Filters in the vena cava
- ❖ Recent insertion of a stomach tube for feeding

If any of the above situations apply to you, have your caregiver use the lateral costal compression, hand position as follows:

LATERAL COSTAL COMPRESSION:

1. Breathe in as deeply as possible.
2. Hold your breath until the caregiver's hands are positioned.
3. The caregiver places hands on either side of your lower ribs, fingers pointing to the back of the chair or bed.
4. Signal your caregiver when you are ready to cough.
5. He/she then squeezes your ribs up and in, just a split second before the cough.

6. It is best to cough up but if unable to, you may swallow or ask your caregiver to suction phlegm from your mouth.
7. This is repeated until you feel relief.

CAUTION:

Do not use lateral costal compression if any of the following applies to you:

- ❖ Osteoporosis
- ❖ Kyphoscoliosis
- ❖ Rib injuries such as fractures, bruising or cancer metastasis