

COPD: Bronchial Hygiene

When you have COPD, you need to get rid of excess mucus in your airways because clearer airways make breathing easier.

"It's disgusting. It's very thick and ropery and sometimes it chokes me. And I don't like it." – Leta, Patient

"It comes on any time and you just have to keep coughing until you can clear your throat, that's the mucus that you have, you have to just keep coughing and coughing until you can get it." – Beverly, Patient

The way you get rid of your excess mucus is by using different bronchial hygiene techniques.

The first step to all of them is to get the mucus moving. Drink plenty of water every day to thin out the mucus. This makes it easier to get it out of your lungs.

Other bronchial hygiene techniques can be used alone or together as part of your bronchial hygiene therapy to bring the mucus up and out of your lungs.

One such technique is controlled coughing. It makes one of your body's natural reflexes more productive.

Here's how you do it. Sit comfortably, and lean forward, resting your arms and upper body.

Inhale through your nose and exhale through pursed lips twice. Inhale a third time, and when you exhale, cough three times without breathing in between coughs.

To control your coughing, resume diaphragmatic and pursed lip breathing. Once you are relaxed and have your breathing controlled again, repeat the exercise.

Using devices such as a PEP device and a flutter valve help get the mucus moving. Some people use vest therapy to help loosen the mucus in their lungs.

For all of these devices, forceful coughing brings up any loosened mucus so you can spit it out.

Work with your healthcare provider to learn how to use these devices and how often you should use them in your personal hygiene plan.

To make sure you are getting the important points let's review.

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Bronchial hygiene techniques help keep your airways clear of mucus. There are a variety of techniques.

They include: drinking plenty of water; controlled coughing; and perhaps using PEP or flutter devices.

You will benefit from practicing these techniques, so work with your healthcare provider on creating your individual bronchial hygiene therapy plan.

"Treatment has helped me, absolutely, it has helped me." – Beverly, Patient

"It never even dawned on me what a difference it could make rather than, you know, the normal breathing. It does help ease the breathing a lot better than normal." – Michael, Patient

Using bronchial hygiene techniques will help you to clear the lungs of mucus so you can breathe easier.