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# Deep Coughing

Deep coughing helps keep your lungs clear. If you've had surgery, this will help you get better faster. Deep coughing also helps you breathe easier and may prevent a lung infection or other complications. Follow these steps to do deep coughing.



## Step 1

- Sit on the edge of a bed or a chair. You can also lie on your back with your knees slightly bent.
- Lean forward slightly.
- If you've had surgery on your chest or stomach, hold a pillow or rolled-up towel firmly against your cut (incision) with both hands. Hug the pillow.
- Breathe out normally.

## Step 2

- Breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose.
- Then breathe out fully through your mouth. Repeat this breathing in and out a second time.
- For the third time, take a slow, deep breath through your nose. Fill your lungs with as much air as you can.

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## Step 3

- Cough 2 or 3 times in a row. Try to push all of the air out of your lungs as you cough. Cover your cough, if possible, with a tissue or your elbow.
- If you cough up mucus, spit it into a tissue. Don't swallow it.
- Relax and breathe normally.
- Repeat the above steps as directed.
- Wash your hands with soap and clean, running water for 20 seconds afterward.

## Follow-up care

Follow up with your healthcare provider, or as advised.

## When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of the following:

- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, or as advised by your provider
- Signs of infection, if you've had surgery. These include redness, swelling, drainage, or warmth at your incision site, or pus or fluid draining from the site
- Minor bleeding from surgical site
- Brownish, white, or bloody sputum
- Upset stomach (nausea) or vomiting
- More pain
- Fast or irregular heartbeat
- New cough

## Call 911

Shortness of breath may be a sign of a serious health problem. Call 911 right away if you have shortness of breath that gets worse or you have trouble breathing, especially with any of the symptoms below:

- Confusion or trouble staying awake
- Loss of consciousness or fainting
- Chest pain or tightness
- Trouble breathing or wheezing
- Skin, lips, or fingernails turn blue
- Coughing up blood

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- Severe pain
  - Dizziness or weakness
  - Severe bleeding or new opening at surgical site