

**Patient Information Leaflet**

**Physiotherapy Department**

**Autogenic Drainage**

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Autogenic drainage is a series of breathing exercises which aims to use flows of air to move sputum (phlegm) from the smaller airways, up into the larger airways so they can be cleared with as little effort as possible.

It involves you hearing and feeling the secretions as you breathe out and controlling the urge to cough until secretions are higher up easily cleared with little effort.

Prior to the treatment make sure you clear the upper airways by huffing or blowing your nose and also drink enough fluids to clear your throat and keep yourself well hydrated.

Please refer to the video link on YouTube to follow the technique (PLYMOUTHNHSPHYSIO):

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_n0nuy8VWml](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_n0nuy8VWml)

Autogenic Drainage consists of three stages:

1. A mobilising phase
2. A collecting phase
3. A clearing phase

## **Breathing Control**

- Place one hand on your stomach and relax your shoulders.
- Breathe gently feeling your stomach rise and fall as you breathe in and out.
- Sigh out gently through your mouth.

- Gradually increase depth of breathing while staying relaxed.

## **A 'test' breath**

- Take a very slow breath in through your nose or mouth.
- Pause at the end of the full breath with your mouth slightly open and count for 3-4 seconds.
- Breathe out gently through your mouth and feeling your tummy muscle to tighten.
- Listen and feel for secretions crackling as you breathe out.

### **1. A mobilising phase**

- This helps to loosen the secretions.
- Take a small breath in, feeling the breath at the bottom of your chest.
- With your mouth open slightly breathe as much air out of your chest as you can
- Repeat 3 breaths.
- Stop the urge to cough.

### **2. A collecting phase**

- This helps to move the secretions up the chest into your main airways.
- As you hear the crackle of the secretions getting louder change to medium sized breaths in.
- Feel the breaths more in the middle of the chest.

- Continue to breathe as much air out of your chest as you can at a slightly faster rate but not so hard that you start to cough or become wheezy.
- Repeat 3 breaths.
- Stop the urge to cough.

### **3. A clearing phase**

- This will help to get rid of the secretions.
- When the crackles are louder still take long, slow full breaths in to the very most that you can manage.
- Continue to breathe as much air out of your chest as you can at a slightly faster rate but not so hard that you start to cough or become wheezy.
- Repeat 3 breaths.
- Stop the urge to cough.

### **Follow with a gentle huff:**

A huff is breathing out through an open mouth and throat by contracting your tummy muscles. Do not force it so much that you cause wheezing or tightness in your chest. The aim is to squeeze air quickly from your lungs, out through your open mouth and throat, as if you were trying to mist up a mirror or your glasses.

Your huff should move the sputum in your chest by making it 'rumble' or 'rattle'. If huffing clears your sputum there is no need to cough. However if it does not clear your sputum, then you may need to. You should only cough if the sputum can be cleared easily.

Try to stop yourself from coughing until the last part of Autogenic Drainage when the secretions are high up and ready to be cleared.

**Please use this technique only if assessed and advised by a Physiotherapist.**

This information sheet is available in large print and other formats and languages. Please contact:  
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