

What is a huff cough?

A huff cough is a type of cough that is a gentler way to bring up mucus. The technique is much like what you would do to fog up a mirror or window. It is also known as a forced expiratory technique.

How do I do a huff cough?

Follow your doctor or respiratory therapist's instructions for how to do a huff cough. Some guidelines include:

- Sit up straight with your chin tilted slightly up and your mouth open.
- Take in a slow, deep breath. Hold it for 3 to 5 seconds.
- Breathe out forcefully with your mouth open.
 - **You should not hear a scraping or wheezing sound when you breathe out.**
 - It should be more like a forced sigh.
- Repeat this 2 more times.
- Follow with 1 or more regular coughs to clear mucus from your larger airways.
- This ends 1 set of huff coughs.

Do 3 sets of huff coughs:

- After each frequency setting during vest treatments.
- After each position of percussion and postural drainage (CPT).
- After each cycle of oscillating PEP therapy.

You can also do a huff cough anytime you feel the need to cough and clear your lungs.

For small children:

- Have them make chicken wings with their arms and bring the “wings” down against their chest while saying the word “huff” **or**
- With an open mouth, have the child fog a mirror **or**
- Put a cotton ball on your hand or a table. Have your child blow the cotton ball off your hand or table with an open mouth.

Why do I need to hold my breath for 3 to 5 seconds?

When you hold your breath, it allows time for air to build up behind the mucus. This build-up helps force the mucus out of the airway. It also allows any part of the airway that has collapsed to re-inflate.

What if I have questions?

Talk with your pulmonologist (lung doctor) or respiratory therapist if you have any questions or concerns.

When should I call the doctor?

Call your doctor if you have any questions or concerns about how you feel. **Call 911 right away** if you have trouble breathing.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.