

Cough assist machine

Information for children, families and carers

We have given you this factsheet because your child has been given a cough assist machine to help aid and support their breathing as part of their medical treatment. It explains what a cough assist machine is, when to use it and what the potential benefits and risks are. We hope it will help to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact us using the details at the end of this factsheet.

What is a cough assist machine?

A cough assist machine helps to clear phlegm from the lungs of children who have a weaker cough. The machine works by blowing air into a child's lungs as they breathe in, and then, after a short pause, it quickly pulls the air out, along with any phlegm, mimicking a normal cough.

Why does my child need to use a cough assist machine?

A cough assist machine can help your child if they have difficulty clearing phlegm due to a weakened cough.

What are the benefits of using a cough assist machine?

A cough assist machine can help your child to:

- take a deeper breath
- cough more effectively
- clear more phlegm from their airways

How should my child use the cough assist machine?

We will teach you and your child how to use the cough assist machine. We will also decide on the most appropriate setting for your child's cough assist machine and check that your child is comfortable with this setting. It is important that you don't change the setting of the machine or your child's technique unless you have discussed it with us first.

We will also give you:

- a separate factsheet explaining how to use the cough assist machine at home
- an individualised treatment plan for your child

When should my child use the cough assist machine?

We will give you instructions on how often your child should use the cough assist machine. However, if your child has a chest infection or a cold, and can feel phlegm in their chest or throat, then they can use the cough assist machine more often until they feel better.

Your child **should not** use the cough assist machine if:

- the phlegm they produce is stained with blood (contact your GP or NHS **111** for advice immediately if their phlegm is heavily stained with blood)
- they have just eaten (they should wait one hour after eating)
- they feel sick or have recently been sick
- they feel drowsy
- they have any chest or tummy pain
- they have had surgery to their chest, tummy, nose or throat (if this is the case, contact us for advice before your child uses the machine)
- they experience sudden shortness of breath
- they have sharp stabbing chest pains that do not go away and are worse when they breathe in

If you are not sure whether your child should use the cough assist machine, or they experience any of the symptoms above or any pain after using the cough assist machine, stop using it and contact us for advice immediately (Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm).

Outside of these hours, contact your GP or call NHS **111** for advice.

In an emergency, call **999** or visit your nearest emergency department.

Are there any risks?

A cough assist machine is a safe treatment. However, as with all medical treatments, there are some potential risks.

Tiredness

If your child is unwell and needs to use their cough assist machine additional times throughout the day, they may feel more tired than usual. If this becomes a problem, please contact us for advice.

Lung damage

There is a very small risk that your child's lungs may be damaged by the cough assist machine's pressures if they are too strong. We will use the lowest pressures possible to reduce this risk.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about the cough assist machine, please contact us.

Children's respiratory physiotherapy team

Telephone: **023 8120 4560** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm)

Email: paedsrespphysio@uhs.nhs.uk

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