

Patient information factsheet

Manual techniques

This factsheet explains what manual techniques are and how they are performed.

What are manual techniques?

Manual techniques are hands-on techniques carried out by physiotherapists in order to aid the clearance of secretions (phlegm) from your lungs. They can involve percussions, shaking and vibrations.

Why are they used?

Sometimes when you have chest infections, the secretions can become thick, sticky and difficult to clear.

Manual techniques can be used in combination with other treatments, such as nebulisers (devices that turn a liquid containing medication into a fine mist that you can breathe into your lungs) and deep breathing exercises, to assist with clearing your chest.

How are manual techniques performed?

Your therapist will find an effective position for your treatment.

Percussion

Your therapist will place a towel over your chest. They will then perform a rhythmical clapping on your chest for up to five minutes in various positions. This should not be painful. Let your therapist know if you experience any pain, discomfort or feel wheezy.

Vibrations or shaking

Your therapist will place their hands on your rib cage. They will then perform a shaking movement in time with your breath out. Your therapist may carry out this technique for several minutes in various positions.

Following the above, your therapist will encourage you to cough to clear any loosened secretions.

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