

PATIENT GUIDE · AIRWAY CLEARANCE

Airway Clearance Techniques

For conditions such as bronchiectasis, cystic fibrosis and chronic bronchitis, effective airway clearance is one of the most powerful things you can do at home. This guide introduces the core techniques.

Why clearance matters

Retained secretions can cause repeated infections, worsening breathlessness, and a persistent cough. Regular clearance keeps the airways open and reduces flare-ups.

The Active Cycle of Breathing (ACBT)

- **Breathing control.** Relaxed, gentle breathing at your normal rate.
- **Deep breathing.** 3–4 slow, deep breaths, holding briefly at the top.
- **Huffing.** A short, forced breath out through an open mouth to move secretions upward.
- Repeat the cycle 2–3 times, finishing with a controlled cough.

Positioning

Certain positions use gravity to help drain specific parts of the lungs. We'll show you which positions match your imaging and symptoms.

Devices we may recommend

- Positive Expiratory Pressure (PEP) devices
- Oscillating PEP devices (e.g. Acapella, Aerobika)
- Flutter valves

Before your appointment

Bring this completed checklist to your first session — it helps me understand your goals and design the right plan for you.

- Your main goal for treatment (e.g. climb stairs without stopping)
- A list of your current respiratory medications and inhalers
- Any recent hospital letters, spirometry or scan reports
- Notes on when symptoms are best and worst during the day
- Typical triggers (exercise, cold air, allergens, stress)
- Any recent chest infections in the past 12 months
- Details of past surgeries or hospital admissions
- Your usual level of daily activity
- Questions you'd like to ask during the session

This guide provides general education and is not a substitute for personal medical advice. If you experience severe breathlessness, chest pain, or a sudden change in symptoms, seek urgent medical attention.