

Breath Stacking

A Guide for Patients

What is breath stacking?

Breath stacking is a technique you can use regularly for keeping lungs clear of secretions. It is used for people with weakness of the muscles used for breathing. A piece of equipment called a modified ambu bag is used to help push more air into the lungs as you breathe in.

Benefits of breath stacking

- Keeps the lungs clear of secretions
- Helps prevent chest infections from developing
- Keeps lungs and chest wall flexible
- Makes it easier to cough effectively
- Improves voice strength

What equipment is needed?

- Modified ambu bag
- Face mask or mouth piece
- One way valve
- Two green connectors



This will be assembled for use by your physiotherapist



Correct assembly of equipment before use

Caution

Only to be used under advice of your physiotherapist as it is not suitable for some respiratory conditions. Do not share breath stacking equipment with anyone as this could spread infection.

Cleaning Equipment

The face mask or mouth piece should be washed in mild soapy water, rinsed in warm water and then allowed to dry naturally once a week.

How is breath stacking done?

(You might need assistance handling the bag)

1. Sit up straight with your back and head supported.
2. Put the mouth piece in your mouth or hold the face mask firmly to your face.
3. If using an assistant, it is important to coordinate the breath with them. Your assistant may be in front of you or if necessary behind you to aid head control during the technique (see picture).



4. Take a deep breath **IN** while your assistant squeezes the bag.
5. Hold the breath (the one way valve will help this).
6. Then immediately take another breath **IN** on top of the first breath while your assistant squeezes the bag again (stacking one breath on top of the other).
7. Take up to 3-4 breaths **IN** one after the other in this way.
8. Remove the mask and breathe **OUT**.
9. This technique may also be followed by a cough instead of a breath out.

How often should breath stacking be done?

One set = _____ breath stacking cycles

A breath stacking cycle is 3- 4 breaths **IN** followed by a breath **OUT** or a cough

Number of coughs = _____ per set

You should do _____ sets

_____ times a day.