

Tasks required for suctioning

Test Your Breathing

Place one hand on your upper chest and one hand on your stomach, just below your ribs. You will probably feel your top hand move more than your bottom hand as you take a breath in. This is an ineffective way of breathing when recovering from using suction, you should be tummy breathing.

How to Tummy Breathe when Recovering from Suction

Breathe in slowly through your nose then out through the mouth.

Aim to make your stomach rise as you breathe in and fall as you breathe out.

The aim is to relax your breathing. Try to slightly reduce the depth and rate of your breathing to reduce recovery time.

It is very difficult to change your breathing pattern however if you practice daily it will become more natural.

Huff

Take a slow half breathe in through your nose. Feel your lower chest expand. Open your mouth wide to make a big O shape with your lips and blow the air out through your open mouth. Practice by steaming up the mirror.

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0151 471 2377

0800 328 2941

palsandcomplaints@merseycare.nhs.uk

To request the leaflet in an alternative format or language please contact the Equality and Diversity Team.

0151 472 7458

equality2@merseycare.nhs.uk

Mersey Care NHS Trust

V7 Building
Kings Business Park
Prescot
Merseyside
L34 1PJ

0151 473 0303

www.merseycare.nhs.uk



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What is suction?

Suctioning is a process that aims to clear the build up of harmful secretions from someone's chest. A suction machine mechanically draws air in through a suction tube / yankauer to remove these secretions. Reduction in the amount of secretions in the patient's chest will help their breathing.

Conditions such as bronchiectasis and chest infections can produce excessive harmful bronchial secretions. This can result in blocking of airways leading to impaired respiration. Physiotherapy aims to achieve independent patient chest clearance however if the patient is too weak, secretions too thick or the patient is unable to cooperate suction can be used to assist.

How is suction used?

Dependent on the location of secretions a suction catheter (flexible long tube) or a Yankauer (hard shorter tube) will be used to remove these secretions.

Suction can be combined with other physiotherapy techniques which move secretions to a point they can be more easily removed. Removal of secretions allows for improved air entry, re expansion of lung tissue and reduced incidence of chest infection.

What does the technique involve?

Your therapist will advise how to perform suction correctly. On receiving this advice follow the below method:

1. Connect the yankauer to the suction tubing.
2. Insert the yankauer into the mouth.
3. Place a thumb over the hole in the suction apparatus and move around either side of the mouth, cheek, arch of tongue as well as below and behind the tongue to clear secretions. Only go as far as you can see.
4. Stop suctioning if patient starts coughing.
5. When finished rinse the yankauer in recently cooled boiled water to remove any clogging of secretions.
6. Re-apply suction whenever patient has secretions in mouth.

Cleaning

Suction sterile or cooled recently boiled water through the interconnecting tubing.

How often?

It is recommended that suctioning be provided when secretions potentially restricting the patients breathing and cannot be cleared by other methods

If the patient is unwell, has an active chest infection, excessive or difficult to clear secretions suction use may need to be increased.

If treatment is making a patient excessively tired reduce the treatment time whilst increasing the number of treatment sessions.

Additional useful points

1. Always check the patient is not distressed before re-suctioning
2. Suctioning can be combined with other treatments such as postural drainage or percussions and vibrations.
3. Seek advice from your therapist if you notice blood in your sputum, chest pains, significant or prolonged shortness of breath when suctioning.