



Asthma - Reactive Airway Disease

Postural Drainage

Respiratory Care Department

If you have a chronic mucus problem or increased mucus from an infection, lying in certain positions allows gravity to drain excess mucus from your lungs. Find positions that are comfortable for you. You can lie on a bed or on the floor, or you can prop a bed up on one end. Maintain each position for at least 5 minutes. Always do postural drainage on an empty stomach, 30 minutes after using a bronchodilator. When you need to cough, sit up and do controlled coughing.

Caution: Check with your physician before trying these positions.

Back:

To drain the front of your lungs, lie on a slanted surface so that your chest is lower than your hips. Place a small pillow under your head and two (2) pillows under your knees. Lie with your knees bent over the pillows. Rest your arms at your sides and breathe using diaphragmatic breathing.

Each Side:

To drain the sides of your lungs, place a small pillow under your head and two (2) or three (3) pillows under your hips. Lie on one side so that your chest is lower than your hips. Breathe using diaphragmatic breathing. After 5 – 10 minutes, switch to the other side.

Stomach:

To drain the back of your lungs, put two (2) or three (3) pillows under your stomach. Kneel over the pillows, so that your chest is lower than your hips. Rest your arms by your head and breathe using diaphragmatic breathing.

Chest Percussion:

Using a cupped hand to lightly clap your chest and back also helps loosen mucus. You can do this by yourself, or have someone do it for you, as you are doing postural drainage. Ask your health care team to show you where and how to clap to clear each part of your lungs. Be careful not to clap on your breastbone or spine. Women should not clap on their breasts.