

Let's Talk About...

Chest physical therapy for infants

Your child can benefit from chest physical therapy (CPT) if they have cystic fibrosis or another lung condition and need to clear mucus from their lungs.

What is chest physical therapy?

Chest physical therapy is used to help move mucus out of the lungs. Keeping the lungs clear of mucus will help your child have fewer lung infections. It can also make the infections less severe.

There are three main parts of CPT.

- 1 Percussion (clapping on the chest wall with a cupped hand, palm facing down)
- 2 Vibration (not used in infant CPT, since babies cannot actively participate)
- 3 Postural drainage: Your child lies or sits in various positions so gravity can help drain these areas of the lung during percussion.

What do I need to know about chest physical therapy?

Before starting CPT, make sure you understand the following:

- Always percuss and vibrate over the ribs. Do not percuss over bony areas like the spine and breastbone, or over the stomach, liver, kidneys, or spleen.
- Do not percuss on bare skin. Put your baby in light, soft clothing such as a T-shirt or onesie.
- Do CPT before meals or 90 minutes to 2 hours after eating so your baby is less likely to vomit.
- Always keep your baby's head slightly elevated. Never place your baby in a head-down position.
- Percussion should be just enough movement to see "body wiggle".



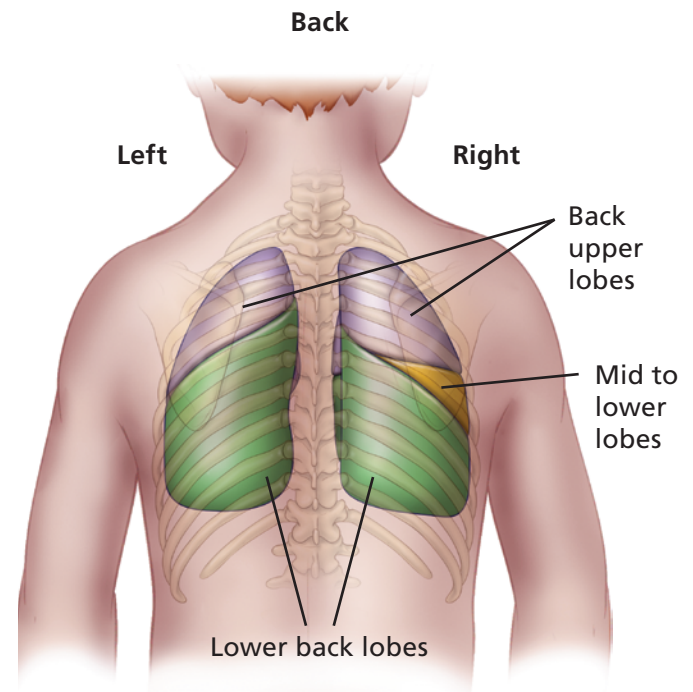
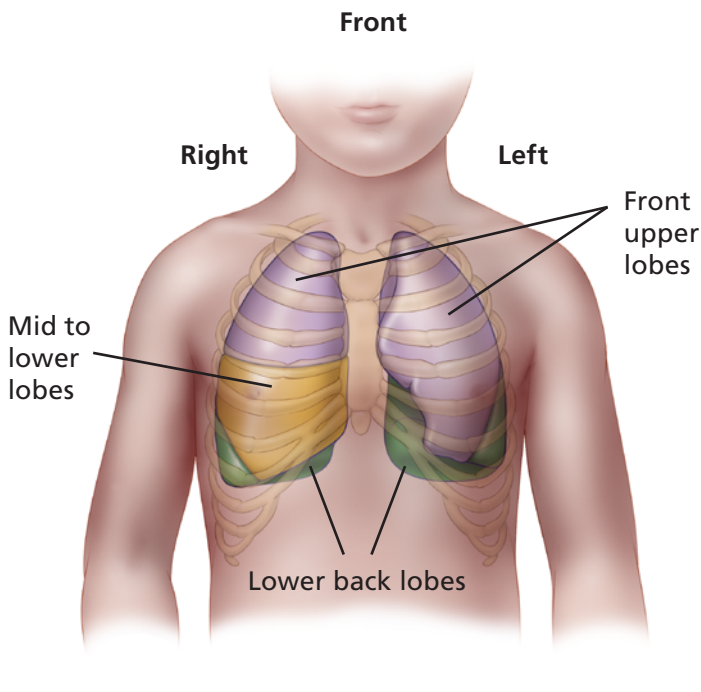
How do I perform chest physical therapy?

You will perform chest physical therapies to four areas: Front upper lobes, back upper lobes, mid to lower lobes and lower back lobes..

Front upper lobes

Use the proper size of palm cups provided by your child's respiratory therapist to perform CPT.

- Place your baby flat on their back with their head slightly elevated.
- Percuss just below the collarbone and above the nipple on both the left and right sides of chest.
- Percuss both the left and right sides for 3 minutes each.



Back upper lobes

- Lean your baby forward over a pillow or your shoulder—similar to a burping position. This helps your baby’s shoulder blades move apart, making it easier to percuss.
- Percuss in the area between the spine and shoulder blades on both sides of the upper back.
- Percuss both the left and right sides for 3 minutes each.

Mid to lower lobes

These are bigger areas, so you will percuss each side for 5 minutes.

- To percuss the right side, place your baby on their left side, lying flat. Percuss the front and side, under the right armpit.
- Place your other hand at the bottom of the ribs as a reminder not to percuss below that point.
- Gently roll your baby over onto their right side and percuss the front and side, under the left armpit.
- Place your other hand at the bottom of the ribs as a reminder not to percuss below that point.

Lower back

- Put your baby flat on their stomach with their head to the side.
- Percuss the area below the shoulder blades and just above the lower ribs on both the left and right sides of spine.
- Place your other hand at the bottom of the ribs as a reminder not to percuss below that point.
- You will percuss both the left and right sides for 3 minutes each.

The CPT treatment should take about 30 minutes to complete.

What if I have questions about chest physical therapy?

If you have questions about CPT or want to make sure you are using the proper technique, ask your child’s healthcare provider.

For more information, refer to the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation’s handout:

An Introduction to Postural Drainage and Percussion.

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