

Let's Talk About...

Cough assist devices

A cough assist device is a machine you can use when coughing becomes hard or your cough is weak. It will make your cough stronger and more productive and allow you to clear secretions from your airway.

Why do I need a cough assist device?

You may need a cough assist device if:

- You can't cough or clear secretions due to an ineffective cough, even when you're feeling well.
- Your pulmonary function tests (PFTs) show your peak cough flow (the strength of your cough) has started to decline.

The motor nerves (the nerves that your brain uses to move your muscles) for your respiratory or breathing muscles can become weak. This makes it hard for you to move air in and out of your lungs.

Why should I use a cough assist device?

A cough assist device can:

- Improve your ability to clear secretions
- Reduce fatigue (tiredness) from trying to cough
- Re-expand the bottoms of your lungs
- Reduce the chance of getting pneumonia [new-MOH-nee-uh], a lung infection

The cough assist device benefits you even if you don't bring up secretions each time you use it. You should use the device at least once a day, but ideally 3 to 4 times a day. You can use it more if you have a cold or allergies with increased mucus production.



How do I get a cough assist device?

If your pulmonologist decides that a cough assist device would benefit your health, they will make an appointment for you with the pulmonary function lab at Primary Children's Outpatient Services.

A respiratory therapist will then show you how the cough assist device works and how to use it. They will also determine which settings best fit your needs.

After this appointment, the physician will send an order to a durable medical equipment (DME) company. The DME company will deliver the device to your home with the settings the respiratory therapist determined.

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