

Cough

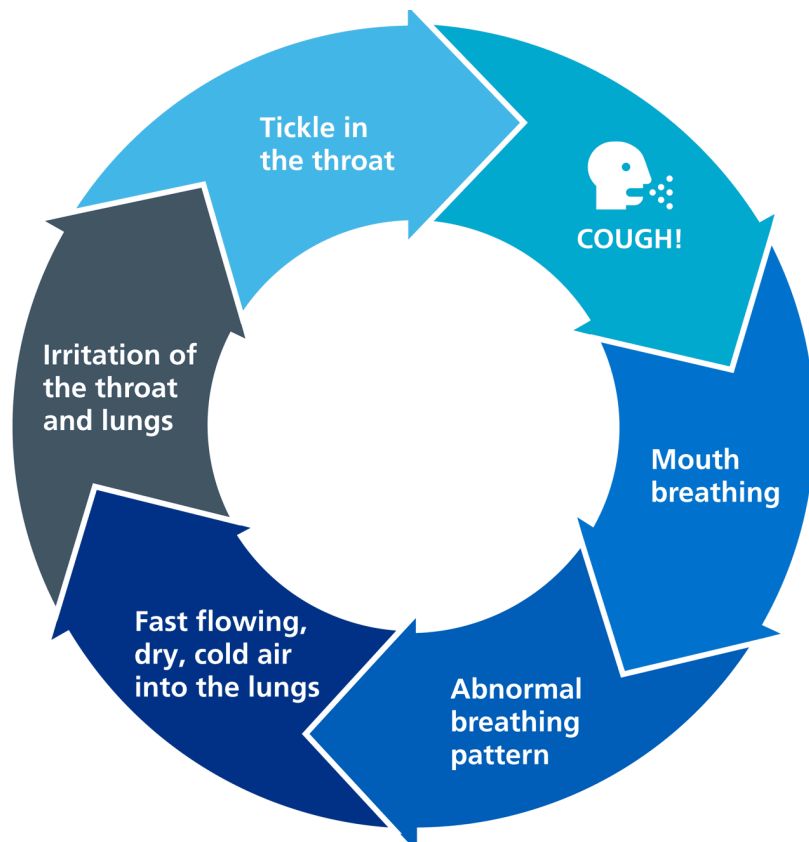


Why do I still have a cough?

A cough is usually a reflex action to clear dust, phlegm and other irritants from your lungs and windpipe. Whilst recovering from COVID you may continue to experience a dry cough for some time.

Over time, a cough can develop into a cycle, where excessive coughing causes irritation and inflammation, which worsens the cough. A dry cough may have no obvious cause and using the advice below will help to prevent this cough.

A problematic cough can also make you breathe through your mouth, which means that lots of dry, fast flowing air enters the lungs, affecting the delicate airway membranes and causing further coughing.



How can I control my cough?

- Practise a 'normal' breathing pattern – gentle, quiet, diaphragmatic (tummy breathing- feeling the tummy rise and fall as you breathe in and out), nose breathing at rest to start with. Aim to practise this little and often so that it becomes habit. Progress this by practising with gentle activity as you are able.

Other techniques to help with reducing your cough:

- Close your mouth and swallow.
- Gently breathe in and out through your nose, until the urge to cough goes away.
- Sip drinks regularly (hot or cold).
- Suck boiled sweets or lozenges.

Using a combination of the above techniques is more effective at reducing your cough – pick the techniques that work best for you!

It can be very difficult to control your cough but keep practising.

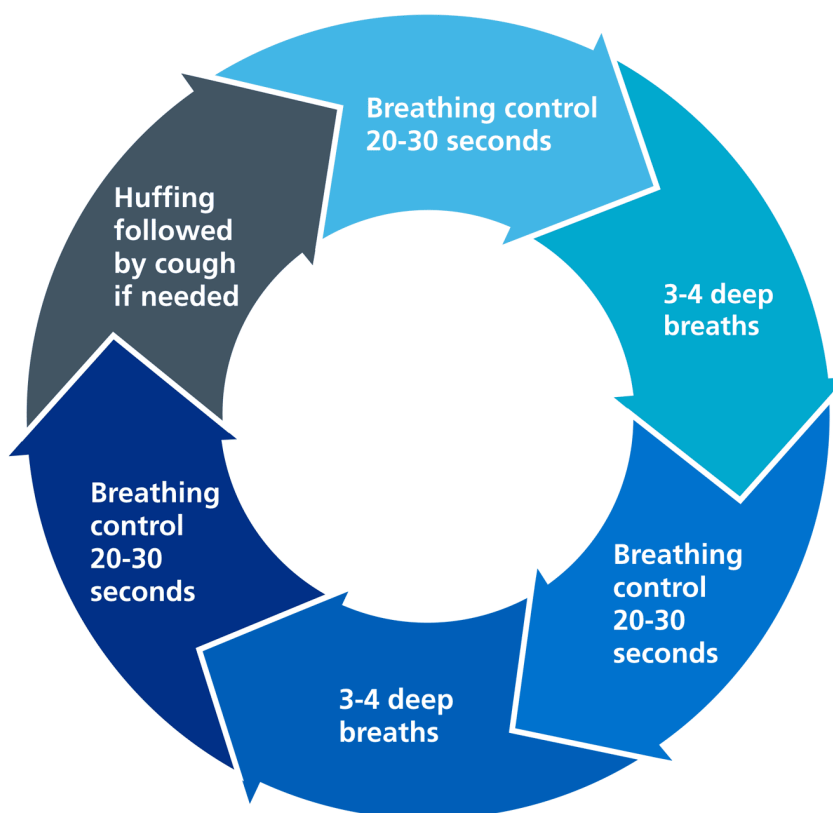
Why do I have a productive cough?

It is important to realise everyone produces sputum as part of the body's normal defence mechanisms. It's how the lungs and airways keep themselves clear and clean.

You may find your chest remains productive with phlegm following an admission to hospital. Your breathing may be noisier than normal, and you maybe short of breath following a chest infection.

It is important to continue to clear the secretions from your lungs. This will reduce the chance of recurrent chest infections, allows you to breathe more freely during exercise and everyday activities and help reduce any uncontrolled coughing.

The breathing exercises below will help you to effectively and efficiently clear your phlegm. It is important not to force clearance and make sure you give yourself plenty of time to rest during and after.



1

Make sure you are sitting upright and comfortably.

- 2 Take a slow, deep breath in through your nose and hold it at the top for a count of 3 (if you can) then let it go gently from your mouth. Repeat 3-4 times.
- 3 Gentle, relaxed breathing for 20-30 seconds (breathing control, see [breathlessness](#) section).
- 4 Repeat steps 2 and 3 through 3 times.
- 5 Huff 2-3 times (Take a slow deep breath in through your nose, then breathe the air out quickly through your mouth, keeping your throat open as if you are steaming up a mirror or your glasses).

Repeat this for 3-4 cycles or until you feel that the phlegm has cleared. Sometimes you can feel dizzy with doing this cycle. Allow enough time at the breathing control parts of the cycle for your breathing to become quiet. Remember the huffing should be short, try not to breathe out for so long that you need to gasp for air. If the dizziness persists, then stop.

You may need to use this technique several times in a day – find a time that is convenient for you and try to use it at times of the day when you feel most productive.

The following can also help with keeping your chest clear

- Positioning – try and keep upright as much as possible. If you have been advised by a physiotherapist to use other positions, then try them.
- Taking prescribed medication of antibiotics and/or steroids
- Taking your inhalers if you have them.
- Keeping well hydrated.
- Steam inhalation.
- Exercise and keep active.