



Using your Cough Assist at home

This leaflet explains the basics of your using your Phillips E70 Cough Assist machine at home. If you have any queries or concerns, please speak to your respiratory physiotherapist.

How the lungs work

The principal function of the lungs is to get oxygen into the body and to remove carbon dioxide. The lungs produce mucus as a protective barrier to catch irritants and pollutants; it is important that the lungs clear this mucus daily to remove these. This is done by the act of coughing.

Some people may be unable to cough and effectively clear secretions as a result of neuromuscular disorders, spinal cord injuries or severe fatigue associated with lung disease. In these cases, your respiratory physiotherapy team may recommend that you use a Cough Assist.

What is a Cough Assist?

It is a machine that uses air pressure to assist the act of coughing by the lungs. The Cough Assist is made up of an air pressure unit, some tubing and a mask or mouthpiece that you wear to allow the air pressure to enter and leave the respiratory system.

What does using the Cough Assist feel like?

Under normal circumstances, coughing happens as a natural reflex. When a Cough Assist is used to support this action, it can initially feel strange and can take some getting used to. The physiotherapy team will discuss with you the most appropriate settings and will input these into the machine so they can't be changed by accident. Most patients will have the machine set up to support the initial 'breath in' required to cough by blowing air at you. This is important to get air behind the mucus to 'shift' it. The machine will then quickly change to sucking air back, providing extra airflow to help improve the strength of your cough. Your physiotherapist will personalise this cycle to suit each individual patient.

When do I use the Cough Assist?

The Cough Assist is usually used at as part of a morning routine but sometimes it may be needed more often throughout the day. Your physiotherapist will recommend how often you should use it.

Your mask or mouthpiece

The Cough Assist works best with a well-fitting mask. We have a range of masks available to use. Sometimes, these can be inflated or deflated with a small syringe to allow a better fit to your face. If you prefer to use a mouthpiece instead of a mask, we can provide this and will discuss the choice as part of your initial Cough Assist setup.

Cleaning and maintenance

The Cough Assist is self-cleaning so does not need regular maintenance.

Your mask or mouthpiece should be washed with a non-perfumed soap, e.g. Simple soap, and warm water. We can supply more tubing and masks / mouthpieces as required and will advise you on how often to change each of these.

Things to look out for:

- The machine will display a peak cough flow reading; your best peak cough flow is _____L/min, please aim to achieve _____L/min when using the Cough Assist.
- Keep an eye on the skin around your face; if a sore develops, contact the team for advice.
- Large leaks around the mask can make the Cough Assist less effective and uncomfortable to use. If you have persistent leaks, contact the team for advice.
- Always switch your machine off on the unit before unplugging it – unplugging when in use will set off the alarm.
- Travel – you will need to take your machine with you on holiday and may need to use it on long haul flights. We will give you a letter to explain its use for your airline. Ask if you need advice.

What if my machine stops working?

If your machine stops functioning, please contact us urgently and we will try to offer a replacement or repair within 1-2 working days. We do not currently offer a 24 hour service.

Hospital admissions

If you are admitted to hospital overnight for any reason or have an outpatient appointment in the Department of Respiratory Medicine ALWAYS BRING YOUR MACHINE WITH YOU. Ask the ward staff to contact Respiratory Medicine if you are admitted under other teams.

Contact us

Please contact us by telephone if your machine has a fault or you think your Cough Assist settings need to be reviewed in clinic.

Clinical Admin Team 11 (Respiratory Medicine)

Monday-Friday, 8am-4pm

Tel: 0118 322 6676 or email: rbbh.CAT11@nhs.net

My Respiratory Physio is: _____

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

RBFT Respiratory Medicine Physiotherapy, November 2023

Next review due: November 2025