

Did you used to play a school recorder? There's a thought. Blowing any instrument is helpful. Even blowing Dandelion seed heads, or maybe those party-blowers which extend.

**5. Coughing** - an effective cough is also important, practice a 'cough' each day.

Breathe in as deeply as you can, hold for a second, then cough.

If you feel your cough is not moving your phlegm, try this - breathing in deeply, hold for a second, then, (don't breathe out), breathe in again (adding to the air already breathed in), and then cough with the increased air volume in your chest.

*NB. Hope these little tools are helpful. If you still have problems with chest infections, or difficulty with coughing effectively, please contact your GP or your Muscle Clinic.*

#### Other publications available from the Myotonic Dystrophy Support Group:

- Anaesthesia and Sedation for patients with Myotonic Dystrophy
- Basic Information for Midwives
- Bowel Problems in Myotonic Dystrophy
- Congenital Myotonic Dystrophy
- Excessive Daytime Sleepiness and Myotonic Dystrophy
- Facts for patients, family members and professionals
- Just Diagnosed
- Myotonic Dystrophy and the Brain
- Myotonic Dystrophy and the Eye
- Myotonic Dystrophy Support Group
- Myotonic Dystrophy Type 2
- Painkillers and Myotonic Dystrophy – what is safe?
- Relatives Information
- Swallowing Difficulties in Myotonic Dystrophy
- The Heart and Myotonic Dystrophy
- Why do we get new families with Myotonic Dystrophy?

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Myotonic Dystrophy  
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# Lungs and Breathing

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# Myotonic Dystrophy

As everyone knows, many body systems can be affected if you have Myotonic Dystrophy, including lungs and therefore breathing.

Whether your lungs are good, and you just want to keep your lungs as fit as possible, or, whether you do have issues with phlegm or have regular chest infections, the following tools can be helpful.

## 1. Bubble PEP

(see photo). You will need a very clean/sterilised empty one pint milk bottle, a straw and a tray or washing up bowl to catch the bubbles.



Fill the bottle with approximate 10cm (that's 4ins to us older folk) with cold water.

Add a squirt of washing up liquid or liquid soap.

Either you can stand at the kitchen counter (with your back straight) or sit at a table (with your back straight) with the bottle on your tray to catch the drips; or put the bottle directly onto your draining board.

Method - Put the straw into the water, breathe in, then put the other end of the straw in your mouth. Using long slow breaths, blow out through the straw (which will create bubbles that come up and out over the top of the bottle). To direct the bubbles away from your nose, hold the straw between your straight fingers as a shield.



Try and do 4-6 long breaths, then breathe in and do a big cough or two (this is one cycle). Have a short rest then repeat the cycle three more times, till you have done a total of 16-24 blows and three coughs in all.

The water in the bottle (and the bubbles) provide a resistance to your blowing, and it is this which creates a pressure back up the straw and into your lungs. This pressure helps to open up your airways and the tiny air sacks (alveoli) in your lungs. This 'opening up' facilitates the removal of phlegm from your lungs so that it doesn't store up and accumulate, causing you chest infections.

If your lungs are healthy, do this 2-3 times per week, build up over time to ten blows and a cough, repeating the cycle three times. Build up the length of your blows by counting and increasing the number of seconds you blow out. This is a good 'work out' for your lungs.

If you normally have issues with chest infections, or phlegm or coughing, you could do this daily, which will help to prevent so many chest infections and help to remove secretions from your chest. Breathe out as long as you can, counting how many seconds the bubbles blow. Over time, try and increase the number of seconds you can blow.

**NB - Asthma - if you also have Asthma, this tool is not for you.**



**2. Singing** - This is excellent as a lung work out. Find your favourite songs on YouTube, or CD, or maybe join a choir and sing along loudly. Then take a deep breath in and do a good effective cough. Again, if you have issues with chest infections or phlegm use this tool daily.

**3. Exercise** - any form of exercise is helpful as it increases the volume of air you take into your lungs and expands/opens your airways.

The exercise you choose needs to be appropriate to your present level of fitness.

This could be anything from walking, or even dancing on the spot or even in a chair/wheelchair; moving your arms and legs to the music. If you are usually very fit, perhaps joining a 'Zoom' or DVD exercise session or a yoga session appropriate to your level of fitness may suit you.

**4. Helpful odds and ends** - do your children/grandchildren like the little pots of bubbles bought in many shops? Blowing these for your children to pop, or even during a face-to-face video phone call can be used.