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The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk if you would like a reference list.

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The PEP Device (page 1 of 2)

What is it?

The PEP is a small device which is used for people who need to clear secretions from their chest. Some people have very floppy airways, which means that when they cough or try to clear secretions they are unable to do so because their airways are trapping the secretions and stopping them from moving. This device has a dial which can alter how easy or difficult it is to breathe out, which helps to keep the airways open and therefore move and clear secretions more easily.



PEP stands for Positive Expiratory Pressure.

It should not be used by patients who have a pneumothorax, severe tuberculosis, right sided heart failure or who are coughing up blood.

What effect does it have?

When you breathe out through the PEP device, this causes a resistance to your airflow which is then passed into your lungs. This helps to hold the lungs open to allow secretions to move more easily.

How do I use it?

When you were given the PEP device you should have been shown how to use it by the physiotherapist who gave you the device.

You can use the device in any position, this is especially important if you normally do your physiotherapy when lying down or have been advised to start doing your physiotherapy in some other position.

There are some other key things to consider when using the device:

- **Number and type of breaths** – take 10-15 deep breaths in through the nose and out through the PEP device, or you can do 3 sets of 5 breaths if you start to feel light headed. You should aim to breathe out more quickly than normal, but not as fast as you can, somewhere in between. This will help open up the lungs and start secretions moving. You can also hold your breath after you have breathed in, and again at the end of your breath out. This will also help to open your lungs and clear secretions.
- **Mouth and cheek position** – the mouth needs to be sealed around

Respiratory Team
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the PEP device and the cheeks kept flat and firm to maximise the air held within the lungs.

- **Secretion clearance** – coughing should be suppressed until the last breath out in the cycle which is performed at twice the speed. This can cause you to start coughing, which will help with the clearance of secretions.
- **How often** – when you are well, use it in the morning and evening for 10-15 minutes each time. This will help keep your chest clear and prevent you from getting an infection. When you are unwell increase that to 3-4 times a day to clear the excess secretions which infections cause.
- **Resistance levels** – at the end of the PEP device there is a dial to change how easy it is to breathe out. This will have been set by the person who gave you the device and they should have explained when and if you need to change this.

Problems

You may find you have problems with the PEP device such as:

- **Coughing throughout** – This is normally due to irritation of secretions which have started to move, but which are not yet high enough to clear from the lungs. Try breathing out more slowly or not breathing out completely.
- **Pain in your chest or ribs** – if you experience any pain then breathe out more slowly. If the pain continues, stop using the device and contact the person who gave it to you.
- **Blood stained secretions** – if you experience any bleeding in your secretions, then stop using the device and contact your GP for advice.

For more information please contact:

- The respiratory physiotherapist who gave you this leaflet. They can be contacted on 01722 429220.