

FACT SHEET



Preventing mucus build up



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Preventing mucus build-up inside your stoma:

- As you breathe you should be able to feel whether your airway is clear. By placing your hand near your stoma you should feel a good volume of warmth as you breathe out.
- You will have chest secretions to cough up and clear away from your stoma area. The amount will vary from person to person.
- Hold some clean tissue or gauze near to your stoma, take some deep breathes and cough any secretions to the top of your airway and then wipe away.
- Try to look inside your stoma with a pen torch and a mirror to ensure that there is no build-up of mucus. If this is difficult then a relative or your district nurse may help you.
- If you allow mucus to build up in your stoma this may alter your breathing.
- You will need to clean you stoma at regular intervals; morning, midday and night (see leaflet 'Cleaning your stoma').
- Keeping your mucus thin will help to make it easier to cough up and should help to reduce build-up.

How to keep your mucus thin:

- You should wear a stoma protector or filter system which will heat and moisten your mucus, helping to keep it thin. While you are in hospital your nurses will discuss this with you, show you how to use them and how often to change them.
- Drinking plenty of water will help to keep the body tissues moist, which will help to keep the secretions in your chest thin and make it easier to cough up.
- You may have a nebuliser unit given to you when you leave hospital and your nurse will show you how to use it. By using 5ml. saline (sodium chloride) in the nebuliser it may help to loosen the mucus to enable you to cough it up.
- Practice deep breathing exercises regularly throughout the day.
- You may need to continue using suction for a little while if you find it difficult to clear your airway. This equipment will be ordered for you before you leave hospital. The nursing staff will teach you and your relatives how to do this.
- Breathing in steam from a bowl of hot water may be helpful if your mucus is becoming thick and difficult to cough up.

Remember that your mucus may change according to the time of year. Your mucus may also become thicker during a cold or flu so you may need to take steps to ensure that you are able to clear your airway.

FACT SHEET SERIES

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