



How to Use an Incentive Spirometer

An Incentive Spirometer is a breathing exerciser used to help you take deep breaths and keep your lungs healthy after surgery. Deep breathing exercises will help open the air sacs in your lungs and may reduce the chance of developing breathing problems (pneumonia) after surgery. It is important to use the Incentive Spirometer on your own to help with your recovery.

How to Use

1. If possible, sit up straight or lean forward. It may be helpful to sit on the edge of a chair or your bed.
2. Hold the Incentive Spirometer upright.
3. Breathe out normally; close your lips tightly around the mouthpiece and take a slow deep breath through your mouth. This will feel like trying to drink a thick milkshake through a straw.
4. As you take a deep breath, the piston in the clear chamber of the Incentive Spirometer will rise. It is important to inhale slowly to allow the air sacs in your lungs time to open. Your Incentive Spirometer may have an indicator to let you know if you are inhaling too fast.
5. After you breathe in as deeply as you can, hold your breath for 3 to 5 seconds. The goal indicator tab will be set based upon the patient's height and age.
6. Take out the mouthpiece and exhale slowly. Relax and breathe normally for a few seconds until the piston returns to the bottom of the chamber.

7. Repeat steps 1 through 6 for a total of 10 times every 1 to 2 hours or as directed by your doctor.

If you start to feel lightheaded or dizzy, slow down your breathing and give yourself more time between the deep breaths.

8. After you are done with the 10 deep breathing exercises, it is very important to take a deep breath and cough to clear the mucus from your lungs.

9. If you have had surgery on your chest or stomach, support your incision by holding a pillow or folded blanket firmly against your incision. This will provide support and decrease the pain you may feel when you cough.

Helpful Tips

- Pain control is important when you do breathing exercises with the Incentive Spirometer. While in the hospital, if you are in pain, tell your nurse. At home, you may use over the counter or prescribed pain medication as directed. It is harder to take a deep breath if you are having discomfort.
- Keep the Incentive Spirometer within reach so that you will remember to use it as directed.
- Continue to use your Incentive Spirometer when you go home. Regular use of this device while you are still recovering at home will help keep your lungs open and functioning properly.