

What is the PEP mask?

The PEP mask is a treatment for children and adults who need help to clear secretions (sputum / phlegm / mucus) from their lungs.

What does it consist of?

It consists of:

- A mouthpiece or facemask
- One way expiratory valve
- A choice of 8 coloured resistors
- A manometer (pressure gauge)



How does the PEP mask work?

When you breathe out through the PEP mask air flows through the attached coloured resistor. As the hole of the resistor is small this temporarily increases the pressure in your airways, splinting them open, helping to get air behind your sputum and move it upwards in readiness for you to clear.

Each of the coloured resistors has a different sized hole; the larger the hole the harder it is to maintain the required pressure of 10-20 cmH₂O measured on the manometer (pressure gauge). Therefore the easiest resistor is the black and the hardest is the brown; you can progress your way through the resistors.

How to use the PEP mask

Your physiotherapist will show you how to use the PEP mask and suggest how often you should use it:

1. Sit upright, or sit at a table with your elbows resting on it and your back straight. You need to have your chin tilted up slightly.
2. Put the PEP over your mouth and nose forming a good airtight seal.
3. Slowly breathe in through the PEP mask, taking a slightly deeper breath than normal.
4. Breathe out through the PEP mask slightly harder than normal to achieve 10-20 cmH₂O on the manometer (pressure gauge).
5. Perform 10 breaths. Try to avoid coughing during these breaths.
6. Take the PEP mask away from your face and perform 2-3 huffs (a fast breath out like you are steaming up a mirror).
7. Finally cough to clear any mucus that you may have loosened.
8. Follow this with some relaxed breathing for about 10-20 seconds.
9. Repeat steps 1-7 until you have reached the number of cycles advised by your physiotherapist.
10. Your treatment should take you approximately 20 minutes.

How to clean your PEP mask

It is recommended you clean your PEP mask after each use by taking it apart and washing it in hot soapy water and air drying the parts before re-assembling them.

Only wipe down the manometer and tubing; do not submerge these parts in water.

Do not leave it to dry in the sun as this may cause it to crack.

Things to look out for

If you notice you are coughing more and your treatment is not clearing your chest it is important to let the respiratory team know, as they may suggest changing your current treatment.

The following are exceedingly rare events but you should stop doing your PEP mask immediately if:

- you suddenly become short of breath
- experience any acute pain
- there is a significant change in the colour of your sputum

The respiratory team should advise you what to do and who to contact if any of these things occur.

If you have broken your PEP mask or notice any cracks in it, again, stop using it and let your respiratory team know.

