

# Using your Acapella®

A patient's guide



### **What is the Acapella®?**

The Acapella® is a small hand held device for airway clearance. It has both resistive and vibratory features, which help loosen and clear secretions from your chest.

The equipment consists of a detachable mouth piece, lid/cover and a base unit. The base unit has a rocker assembly with a counterweighted plug and magnet with an adjustable dial.

### **How does the Acapella® work?**

When you breathe out through your Acapella®, the airflow causes the rocker to move in one direction. The rocker, counterweighted by the magnet, moves back into its original position with a

see-saw action. This causes the vibration and resistance to your airflow which is then transmitted to your lungs.

The resistance to the airflow will help keep your airways open to get air behind the sputum and help it move upwards.

The vibrations will help to loosen secretions from airways and move them up more easily for effective chest clearance.

The dial at the end of the Acapella® varies the resistance to the airflow which changes how easy or difficult it is to breathe out. Your physiotherapist will advise on this.



## **How to use the Acapella®**

Your physiotherapist will show you how to use the Acapella®.

- You can use the Acapella® in sitting, lying down or any other postural drainage positions as advised.
- Do a few relaxed slow breaths before using the Acapella®.
- Make sure you form a tight seal with your lips around the mouthpiece.
- Keep your cheeks held in to maximise the vibration felt in your lungs.
- Take a breath in slightly bigger than normal but not a full deep breath.
- Breathe in through your nose or mouth. Hold your breath for approximately 2-3 seconds.
- Breathe out through the Acapella® actively but not forcefully.
- Breathe out for approximately 3-5 seconds so that you can feel vibrations in your chest.
- Breathe out as far as comfortable but do not breathe out until you are completely empty.
- Try to suppress your cough.
- Repeat 8-10 breaths.
- Do a few more relaxed slow breaths without the Acapella®.
- Then huff as directed 1-2 times.
- Repeat this for 10-15 minutes in the position advised by your physiotherapist or until you have cleared all your sputum.

## How often?

- Try to use your Acapella® twice daily or as directed by your physiotherapist.
- If you are unwell or have an active infection you may need to increase this to 3-4 times per day to clear the excess secretions in your lungs.
- If you are unwell and using the Acapella® several times a day you may need to reduce how long you do it for each time to avoid getting too tired.
- If you have a Pneumothorax (collapsed lung), or are coughing up fresh blood then stop using the Acapella®. Contact your physiotherapist for further advice.

## How to clean your Acapella®?

- After each use take apart your Acapella® into four pieces. Wash it in warm soapy water and rinse thoroughly. Allow parts to air dry.
- Your Acapella® should be sterilised at least once a week by using one of the following methods below.
- Boil parts in water for five minutes. Use distilled, deionised or de-mineralised water to prevent the metallic components getting calcified.
- Acapellas can be steam sterilised.
- Several other methods are recommended by the company. Please refer to the instruction manual.
- **Do not microwave.**
- **Do not use products containing bleach as it may corrode the nickel plated mechanism in the device.**

**NB:** Please remember to bring your Acapella® if you have a planned admission to the hospital (or an outpatient appointment in the Lung Defence Clinic), so that the physiotherapist can check your technique.

If you have any questions about your Acapella® then please contact the physiotherapy team on 01480 364215 or ask when you come to an outpatient clinic.



**Papworth Hospital NHS Foundation Trust**  
Papworth Everard, Cambridge, CB23 3RE

Tel: 01480 830541

Fax: 01480 831315

[www.papworthhospital.nhs.uk](http://www.papworthhospital.nhs.uk)

A member of Cambridge University Health Partners



Papworth Hospital is a smokefree site



Keep in touch with Papworth Hospital and receive a quarterly newsletter. Join our membership free of charge at [www.papworthmembership.com](http://www.papworthmembership.com)

Tel: 01480 364929

Author ID: Physio Team Leader  
Department: Physiotherapy  
Re-printed: January 2016  
Review date: January 2019  
Version: 1.1  
Leaflet number: PI 33

Large print copies and alternative language versions of this leaflet can be made available on request.