Incentive Spirometer

An incentive spirometer is a tool that can help keep your lungs clear and active. This tool measures how well you are filling your lungs with each breath. Taking long deep breaths may help reverse or decrease the chance of developing breathing (*pulmonary*) problems (especially infection) following:

- Surgery of the chest or abdomen.
- Surgery if you have a history of smoking or a lung problem.
- A long period of time when you are unable to move or be active.

BEFORE THE PROCEDURE

- If the spirometer includes an indictor to show your best effort, your nurse or respiratory therapist will set it to a desired goal.
- If possible, sit up straight or lean slightly forward. Try not to slouch.
- Hold the incentive spirometer in an upright position.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

1. Sit on the edge of your bed if possible, or sit up as far as you can in bed or on a chair.
2. Hold the incentive spirometer in an upright position.
3. Breathe out normally.
4. Place the mouthpiece in your mouth and seal your lips tightly around it.
5. **Breathe in slowly** and as deeply as possible, raising the piston or the ball toward the top of the column.
6. Hold your breath for 3-5 seconds or for as long as possible. Allow the piston or ball to fall to the bottom of the column.
7. Remove the mouthpiece from your mouth and breathe out normally.
8. **Rest for a few seconds** and repeat Steps 1 through 7 at least 10 times every 1-2 hours when you are awake. Take your time and take a few normal breaths between deep breaths.
9. The spirometer may include an indicator to show your best effort. Use the indicator as a goal to work toward during each repetition.
10. After each set of 10 deep breaths, practice coughing to be sure your lungs are clear. If you have an *incision* (the cut made at the time of surgery), support your incision when coughing by placing a pillow or rolled up towels firmly against it.

Once you are able to get out of bed, walk around indoors and cough well. You may stop using the incentive spirometer when instructed by your caregiver.

RISKS & COMPLICATIONS

- Breathing too quickly may cause dizziness. At an extreme, this could cause you to pass out. Take your time so you do not get dizzy or light-headed.
- If you are in pain, you may need to take or ask for pain medication before doing incentive spirometry. It is harder to take a deep breath if you are having pain.

AFTER USE

- Rest and breathe slowly and easily.
- It can be helpful to keep track of a log of your progress. Your caregiver can provide you with a simple table to help with this.

If you are using the spirometer at home, follow these instructions:

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You are having difficultly using the spirometer.

- You have trouble using the spirometer as often as instructed.
- Your pain medication is not giving enough relief while using the spirometer.
- You develop fever of 100.5° F (38.1° C) or higher.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You cough up bloody sputum that had not been present before.
- You develop fever of 102° F (38.9° C) or greater.
- You develop worsening pain at or near the incision site.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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