

Patient information

The Flutter

What is the Flutter?

The Flutter is a device that can be used to help people with respiratory conditions such as bronchitis, bronchiectasis, Cystic Fibrosis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), asthma or chest infection, to remove sputum (phlegm) from their chest.

It should only be used as instructed by your physiotherapist.

What does it consist of?

It is a small, pipe-shaped portable device which is made up of four parts: a mouthpiece, a steel ball, a semi-circular cone and a perforated cover.



How does it work?

When you breathe out through the Flutter, pressure builds up in your lungs. This helps to keep your airways open and allows air to get behind the sputum and help move it upwards. The vibrations transmitted through your chest wall by the action of the steel ball also help to loosen sputum from the sides of your airways.

How to use it?

Your Physiotherapist will demonstrate and teach you how to use the Flutter. Make sure that you have a glass of water and a box of tissues close to hand.

1. The Flutter device should be used in an upright sitting position.
2. Close your lips around the mouthpiece of the Flutter, making sure there is a good seal.
3. The stem of the Flutter is should initially be positioned horizontally and then can be adjusted until you find the position that gives the strongest fluttering sensation in your chest when you exhale through it.
4. Next, breathe in slowly through your nose (only slightly deeper than normal).
5. Hold your breath for 3-5 seconds and then breathe out through the Flutter mouthpiece at a slightly faster rate than normal. Keep your cheeks stiff and avoid covering the exit holes with your fingers.
6. Repeat these breaths 4-8 times (as instructed by your physiotherapist). Any urge to cough should ideally be suppressed at this stage.
7. Afterwards, take a deep breath to full inspiration, hold your breath briefly and then follow this by a forced expiration (a hard and fast breath out). This should stimulate a cough and help you clear the sputum.
8. A period of relaxed breathing should then be carried out before continuing.

You can try this is technique in conjunction with the active cycle of breathing technique (see ACBT leaflet) to aid the removal of sputum.

The above sequence can be repeated as directed by your Physiotherapist, or as necessary.

How to clean it?

It is very important that the Flutter is kept clean to prevent the spread of infection.

The Flutter can be taken apart (by unscrewing the perforated cover) and then cleaned in hot soapy water. It should then be rinsed and allowed to air dry

thoroughly before putting it back together. Do **not** dry with a cloth as this can leave particles of dust and fibres on the Flutter which could be then be inhaled.

Contact details

If you need any help, or advice, please contact:

The Respiratory Physiotherapy Team

West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust, Hardwick Lane, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 2QZ

Tel: 01284 713570

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<https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust>



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