
What is an incentive spirometer?

An incentive spirometer is a device that helps your child expand their lungs and breathe deeply. It is often used to help prevent breathing problems after surgery. Sometimes, it is used to help treat breathing conditions, such as pneumonia.

Why does my child need it?

After surgery, children often have pain and do not breathe as deeply as they should.

- When this happens, the airways can get blocked with mucus. This can cause breathing problems.
- Lying in bed can make the problem even worse.
- An incentive spirometer can help your child take deep breaths and prevent breathing problems after surgery.

What are the steps for using it?

For best results, have your child:

- Sit up straight.
- Hold a pillow or rolled towel over the place where they had surgery. This helps to support the area.
- Put the mouthpiece in their mouth and inhale (breathe in) as deeply as they can.
- Hold their breath for 2 to 3 seconds and exhale (breathe out). There should be some resistance.
- Repeat this 10 to 15 times.

Talk with your child's nurse or respiratory therapist about how often your child needs to use the incentive spirometer.

What else do I need to know?

Using the incentive spirometer can cause your child to cough. Coughing removes mucus and fluids from the lungs. Your child should cough as often as possible, such as every hour while they are awake, or as advised by the doctor.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.