Deep Breathing

Deep breathing is vital to your health. It opens the tiny air sacs in your lungs. It also helps keep your lungs and airways clear. You take many deep breaths each hour without even being aware of it. These deep breaths are automatic and occur in the form of sighs and yawns.

There are times when your normal breathing pattern changes. Your breathing becomes more shallow when

- You are moving very little.
- You are on bedrest.
- You have pain after surgery.

You may try to avoid deep breathing after surgery in an effort to reduce pain. Taking full, deep breaths will help prevent lung problems after surgery. Pain medicine can be given to help you take deep breaths more easily.

Your nurse will explain the deep breathing and coughing exercises you will need to do after surgery. These are done to expand your lungs. This helps prevent infection and other lung problems. You will be shown how to use the incentive spirometer. This is a tool to help you breathe deeply. Coughing is needed when you have secretions in your lungs.

**Deep Breathing**

Practice these steps before surgery:

1. Place your hand on your stomach. Breathe in deeply and slowly through your nose. Focus on pushing your stomach out as you breathe in. Hold your breath for a second or two.

2. Breathe out slowly and fully through your mouth.

3. Repeat twice more.

4. Breathe in again, hold your breath, and then cough (if told to do so) from deep in the lungs (not a shallow throat cough) or repeat step 2. Support (splint) your incision to decrease pain while coughing.

5. Repeat exercise.
How to Use Your Deep Breathing Exerciser (Incentive Spirometer)

1. Hold the unit upright, breathe out as usual and place your lips tightly around the mouthpiece.

2. **Take a deep breath.** Inhale enough air to slowly raise the Flow Rate Guide between the arrows.

3. **Hold the deep breath.** Continue to inhale, keeping the guide as high as you can for as long as you can, or as directed by your nurse or respiratory therapist.

4. **Breathe out and relax.** Remove the mouthpiece and breathe out as usual. After each long, deep breath, take a moment to rest, relax, and breathe normally. Repeat this exercise 10 times an hour, every day you are in the hospital or as directed by your nurse.

5. **Cough** after using your breathing tool ten times.