How To Use An Incentive Spirometer
(Tracheostomy Tube)

Purpose:
Deep breathing exercises with your incentive spirometer (breathing exerciser) will open the air sacs in your lungs and may reduce future problems. You can use this incentive spirometer on your own and take an active part in your recovery!

Steps:
1. A one-way valve called a "T" piece will be placed on the open end of the clear tubing instead of the mouthpiece. The port or opening of the "T" piece, which does not have a rubber valve on it, will fit onto your tracheostomy tube.
2. Hold the incentive spirometer upright.
3. Your respiratory therapist or nurse will determine how deeply you should be able to normally breathe based on your sex, height, and age.

Your expected amount is ______________ ml.
4. Attach the open port of the "T" piece to your tracheostomy tube. Breathe out normally, then inhale slowly and deeply. This slow deep breath will raise the piston in the clear chamber of the spirometer.
   - It is important to breathe in slowly to allow the air sacs in your lungs time to open. Your incentive spirometer may have an indicator to let you know if you are breathing in too fast.
5. Continue to breathe in, trying to raise the piston as high as you can. Read the volume that you have achieved at the top of the piston.
   - If you have had surgery on your chest or stomach area, do not be alarmed if your breath is not very deep. Each day you use your incentive spirometer you should see improvement in how deep a breath you can take.
6. When you feel like you cannot breathe in any longer, hold your breath for 3 - 5 seconds, then breathe out slowly.
7. Breathe normally for a few breaths and let the piston return to the bottom of the chamber. You will be able to breathe in and out without having to remove the "T" piece from your tracheostomy tube.

8. Set the goal indicator tab at the level that you reached.

9. Repeat the slow, deep breath in and slow breath out again. Continue this cycle for a total of 10 breaths. If you start to feel lightheaded or dizzy, slow down your breathing and take a longer time with normal size breaths between the deep breaths.

10. After you have taken 10 deep breaths on your incentive spirometer, it is important to cough to try to remove secretions that build up in your lungs.
   - If you have had surgery on your chest or stomach area, it will help to splint your incision with a pillow or a folded blanket while you cough. Place the pillow or the folded blanket over the top of the incision, and wrap your arms around it like you are hugging it. This will provide support and decrease some of the pain you feel when you cough.

11. Repeat steps 2 - 9 every 1 - 2 hours, or as ordered by your doctor.

**Helpful Hints:**

- Pain control is important when you do your breathing exercises with the incentive spirometer. Ask your nurse how often you can have pain medicine and do not be afraid to take it as needed. This will help you get the most out of your deep breathing exercises.

- You may find it helpful to sit on the edge of a chair or on the edge of the bed when doing your deep breathing exercises.

- Keep the incentive spirometer within reach so you will remember to use it frequently. To remember to use it every 1 - 2 hours, some patients use their incentive spirometer at the commercial breaks between TV shows.

- Continue to use your spirometer when you go home. Using your incentive spirometer frequently while you are still recovering at home will help keep your lungs clear.

If you would like more written information, please call the Library for Health Information at (614)293-3707. You can also make the request by e-mail: health-info@osu.edu.

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- Upon request all patient education handouts are available in other formats for people with special hearing, vision, and language needs, call (614) 293-3191.