Percussion helps mucus move in the lungs. It is also called “cupping” or “clapping.”

Infant

To percuss an infant, tent two or three fingers together. Use a brisk, but gentle, up and down wrist motion so that a hollow sound, like removing a suction cup, is produced. The sound should not be a slapping sound.

Child and Adult

To percuss an older child or an adult, cup your whole hand tightly together. Be careful not to use only your fingers or only the heel of your palm. Use a brisk, but gentle, up and down wrist motion so that a hollow sound, like removing a suction cup, is produced. The sound should not be a slapping sound. Use both hands in an alternating, rhythmic pattern. Percussion is done for 1 to 3 minutes in each prescribed position of postural drainage.

The patient can be put in a series of positions known as postural drainage positions so that gravity helps secretions move out of the lungs. The positions recommended for the patient differ according to which parts of the patient’s lungs are most affected by the mucus. An infant or young child can be positioned on a pillow in bed or on your lap. Older children and adults can be positioned on an inverted chair, pillows, a stack of newspapers covered by a blanket, or a padded board. The following pictures show the various postural drainage positions.
PERCUSSION AND POSTURAL DRAINAGE

General Guidelines

1. Percussion and postural drainage should be done at least twice a day: on arising in the morning and at bedtime. Percussion and postural drainage should be done more often when the patient has a cold or has a lot of secretions he or she is unable to cough up.

2. Percussion and postural drainage should be done long enough before meals so that the patient has enough time to rest before eating.

3. Nebulization therapy is done either before or after postural drainage, depending on the doctor’s order. Your doctor has ordered nebulization BEFORE / AFTER postural drainage.

4. Protect the patient’s skin from irritation during postural drainage. Have the patient wear a lightweight cotton shirt. Place a thin towel over the area to be percussed. You should not wear rings, bracelets, or low-hanging necklaces while percussing the patient.

5. If the patient has high blood pressure, dizziness, or arthritis, do not put the patient in a head-hanging-down position for percussion and postural drainage.

6. Do not percuss or do postural drainage when the patient is coughing up blood or having asthmatic episodes.

7. Limit the number of positions for postural drainage used in any one session. Four to six different positions are usually all a child can tolerate in one session.

8. Do not percuss over the patient’s breast bone, spine, and kidneys. Do not percuss over any body areas that are tender.

9. Percuss and drain the areas of greatest involvement first.

10. The patient should cough two to three times after each position used during postural drainage. It is important to remind the patient not to suppress any cough.

OTHER INSTRUCTIONS