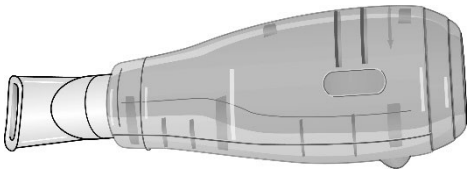
Acapella®

The Acapella® is a hand-held device that combines pressure and vibrations to help clear mucus and expand the lungs.

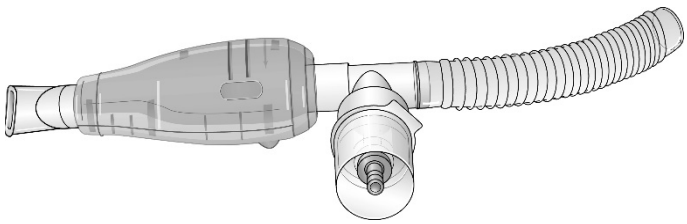


How to Use the Acapella®

1. Wash your hands with soap and warm water. You may also use anti-bacterial hand gel.
2. Set the dial to a number which gives you a comfortable breath when breathing out. Rotate the end dial to "1" for less resistance, and "5" for more resistance.
3. Sit upright with elbows resting on a table, using good posture.
4. Place the mouthpiece between your teeth. Make a tight seal around the mouthpiece with your lips.
5. Take a deep breath in..
6. Hold your breath for 2-3 seconds. Blow out slowly and forcefully. Breathe out three to four times longer than you breathe in. Keep your cheeks hard and flat while you are breathing out. You should feel a "fluttering" feeling in your neck and lungs. If you put your hand on your chest, you should feel the vibrations. If you do not feel vibrations on your chest, blow out with more force or change the dial for more resistance.
7. Keep taking slow deep breaths while breathing out through your Acapella® valve. Do this for about 5 minutes or 20 breaths.
8. Remove the mouthpiece and cough or "huff cough." To huff cough, take a deep breath. Hold it for 1-3 seconds. Then, force air out of your lungs with your mouth open. It is like you are trying to fog a mirror.
9. Keep breathing with the Acapella® with breaks to cough about every 5 minutes. Total treatment time should be 20-30 minutes.
10. **It is very important to pace yourself as you breathe out into the device.** Pause for a few seconds between breaths. If you feel dizzy or get a headache, stop and breathe normally. Finish your treatment at a slower pace.
11. **After doing a treatment, remove the mouthpiece and open the device.** Let air dry between uses. Air drying will help prevent germs from growing inside it. The round metal disc inside should be dried to prevent rusting.
12. Your doctor has ordered the therapy _____ times per day.

Using with a Nebulizer

You can use the Acapella® at the same time as your nebulizer treatment. Follow the set-up picture. You must take breaths in through the Acapella® mouthpiece to get medicine into your lungs.



Cleaning and Disinfecting

Clean and disinfect the Acapella® every day.

Rubbing Alcohol Method

1. Take the Acapella® apart. Wash the pieces in warm soapy water.
2. Rinse with hot tap water.
3. Place the pieces in a bowl. Add enough rubbing alcohol (isopropyl alcohol) to completely cover the pieces.
4. Soak the pieces for 5 minutes.
5. Rinse the pieces with **sterile water**. **Do not** use water from the faucet, bottled, or distilled water. You can make water sterile by boiling it for 5 minutes. Use this water once and then throw it out.
6. Place the pieces on a paper towel to dry.

Dishwasher/Baby Bottle Steamer Method

1. Take the Acapella® apart.
2. Put pieces in a basket on the top shelf of the dishwasher or in steamer.
3. To cut mineral build up from your water, add a rinse aid to dishwasher.

Cleaning a Nebulizer

If you are using a nebulizer, clean this at the same time. Review "Health Facts for You" #6922 Nebulizer for Respiratory Therapy for cleaning instructions.

When to Call

Contact your home health provider if you have any questions or need supplies.

Who to Call

If you have questions, please contact your provider through MyChart or call your provider listed in your After Visit Summary or After Hospital Care Plan. For a list of UW Health Clinics, please visit www.uwhealth.org/.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 3/2026. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing HF#6006.