

Airway Clearance Techniques: Autogenic Drainage

What are Airway Clearance Techniques?

Airway Clearance Techniques (ACTs) are an essential part of management for people with cystic fibrosis (CF). Performing regular airway clearance helps loosen the thick sticky mucus from the airways so it can be cleared more easily.

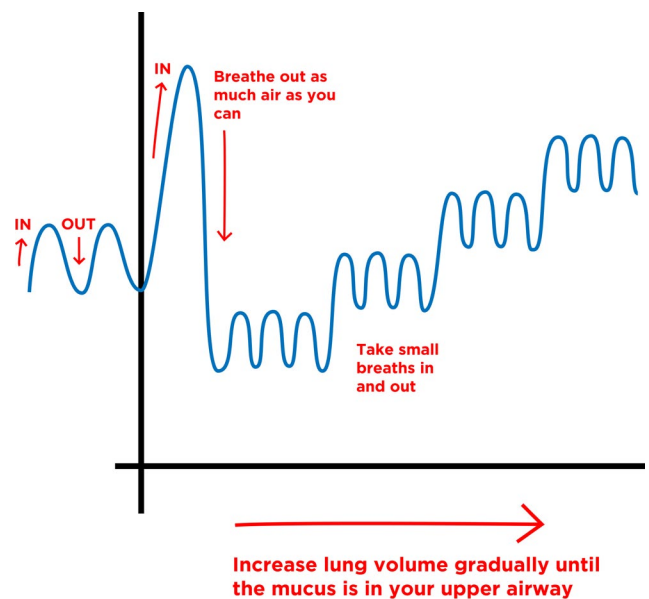
Autogenic drainage (AD), or self-drainage, is an airway clearance technique that is widely used in European CF centres and increasing in use in Australia.

What is AD?

AD can be adapted to suit your needs. It can be combined with a PEP® or Flutter® device and can be done in modified postural drainage positions or sitting. It requires a great deal of concentration and intuition, and it may take some time to learn the technique. Each AD routine will be different and should always be taught by a CF specialist physiotherapist.

AD used to be taught in three stages but more recently it has been described as a fluid breathing technique.

How long you spend breathing at each lung volume will depend on the location of mucus and will be determined by you and your specialist physiotherapist.



AD Technique Example

- Your first breath in is often larger than a normal breath and may include a breath hold.
- Breathe as much air out as you can and then take small breaths in and out at the bottom of your lungs until you feel a crackle. This is mucus in your small airways.
- When the crackle gets louder it means you are ready to take larger breaths in.
- Continue breathing at this level until you can feel the mucus has moved higher in the airways, increasing lung volume gradually until the mucus is in the upper airways and ready to clear.
- Mucus can then be cleared by huffing or with a cough.

Autogenic drainage takes practice to get it right and your technique may need to change when you have more or less mucus to clear. Remember to talk to your physio in clinic to help perfect your technique.

Useful Resources

- [AD \(CF Physio\)](#)
- [AD \(Bronchiectasis Toolbox\)](#)
- [CFWA Airway Clearance Factsheets](#)

Last reviewed September 2020.

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