

Breezeway

Articles:

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Did you know?

- President Abraham Lincoln carried a harmonica in his pocket.
- Harmonicas are inexpensive, among the least costly of musical instruments available.

CAN THE HARMONICA HELP BREATHING?

by Karen Buck, RRT

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Cheyenne Regional Medical Center

Anything that improves or maintains lung function also helps reduce asthma and/or COPD symptoms. The very nature of playing the harmonica facilitates deep breathing and promotes increases in lung capacity. These are both very desirable things.

Note: There is something of a controversy ranging in the biking and wall climbing community on whether or not the lungs can be “trained” using specific lung training devices. Some physicians and therapists argue that the lungs are not constructed like muscles and therefore cannot be “trained” as such. Other physicians and therapists argue back that while the lungs themselves may not be “trainable” like a muscle is, the diaphragm and other parts of the body involved in respiration CAN be trained. While I am not weighing in on either side, let me just point out that plain old facts and results speak for themselves. It is well documented that lung capacity can be increased by exercise. Athletes know this; musicians know this. Professional musicians such as trumpet players and saxophonists (to name a few) have acquired (through practice and work) improved lung function. They have all acquired the ability of increased airflow, better control over

their airflow, and more importantly deep breathing and increased lung capacity.

Playing the harmonica involves long slow draws (inhalations), breath control, and awareness of breathing patterns. Some harmonica songs require pretty good lung capacity (for lots of blow notes in a row). Even simple beginning songs on the harmonica facilitate these traits. If you continue to play and improve, odds are, that your lung capacity will also improve. If you plan to pursue the harmonica seriously, then you will reap many of the lung capacity benefits simply by doing the practicing that proficiency requires. However, even assuming that you don't want to become a serious harmonicist or spend lots of time playing the harmonica, there are ways to use the harmonica to greatly assist improvements in breathing and lung capacity.

Interested? Read on. . .

Medical science has created several gadgets to assist folks with impaired lung function in checking and maintaining their lung capacity. One of these is the *Incentive Spirometer*. The Incentive Spirometer comes in several “flavors.” The most expensive ones

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HOW CAN THE HARMONICA HELP? (CONTINUED)

(continued from page 1)

are electronic and hook to computers or other devices to measure and chart breathing. They will measure and graph inspiration (how much air you can suck in) and expiratory flows (how much air you can blow out). Your doctor probably made you blow into one of these things when you went for testing. A much less expensive version of the professional level incentive spirometer is also available. This model is made from plastic and is not electronic. It looks like a clear plastic hollow tower (about 8 inches tall) containing a ball or platform inside the tower that rises and falls as you breathe in air. A plastic hose is attached to the bottom of the tower with a mouthpiece attached to the end of the hose. The tower has markings on it to measure the height of the ball (when you breathe in through the mouthpiece) and indicates the amount of air taken into the lungs. Anyone who had surgery and spent more than a couple of days in the hospital may have had one of these things show up on their bed stand (courtesy of your friendly respiratory therapist). These models are often sold for home care and used for patients recovering from surgery, elderly patients, and/or anyone in need of some therapeutic assistance in breathing.

The harmonica can be used in much the same way the incentive spirometer is used to promote long, slow, deep breaths. While the harmonica provides no quantitative feedback on how much air you're taking into your lungs and it can't

draw charts, it can definitely help you exercise your lungs, your diaphragm, and all of the supporting muscles. Additionally, the harmonica is inexpensive, portable, non intrusive (it doesn't look weird or medical) and you can use it almost anywhere. Most importantly after doing your breathing exercises on the harmonica (perhaps as a warm-up) you can start playing and enjoying the music.

* * * * *

A pulmonary support group (Breathe Right) meets monthly in Cheyenne, WY, and Karen invites PH patients in the Cheyenne area to attend the meetings.

Karen also leads a harmonica class (Windy Monicas) for her patients. The group will be meeting on November 11th. A short video clip that Karen provided of the group playing at a summer picnic is posted on the WY PH group website. <http://www.orgsites.com/wy/pulmonary-hypertension-support/index.html>

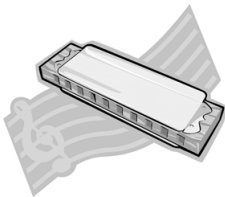
Contact Karen for more information on her support groups:

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Special Note: Karen will attend our April 2010 meeting and give the group breathing and harmonica lessons. This is a wonderful opportunity to have some fun and learn some helpful breathing techniques. Make sure you mark April 10, 2010 on your calendar.

The harmonica can definitely help you exercise your lungs, your diaphragm, and all of the supporting muscles.



BEATING BLOOD STREAM INFECTIONS

Central venous catheters (CVCs) can cause blood stream infections. If you have pulmonary arterial hypertension, you may receive one of your medications through a CVC. Although the CVC is the best way for you to get the medication you need, it also offers a route for germs (bacteria) to enter your body.

The bacteria that enter the body can cause local or systemic infections. Local infections are confined to an area of skin and soft tissue near the catheter's exit site. These infections are usually less severe, but are still a great concern. With systemic infections, the bacteria invade the blood stream and are more severe and can be life-threatening if not quickly treated. Treatment of the infection depends on whether it is a local or bloodstream infection. The treatment may include antibiotics, hospitalization, and, in some cases, replacement of the catheter.

Catheter infections occur from bacteria, which are microscopic organisms, also called microorganisms. These microorganisms are present everywhere, even though you cannot see them. They are on the skin of your hands and body, in your mouth and nose, and in the environment around you. Normally, our bodies keep these microorganisms from entering, but when there is an opening in the skin (such as at the catheter exit site), bacteria can sometimes get in.

The type of catheter used to give long-term intravenous medications is called a tunneled catheter; these catheters pass through a tunnel under the skin before entering a large vein in the chest. Tunneled catheters have a cuff that lies within the tunnel; after a period of weeks, tissue surrounding the cuff adheres tightly to it and creates a seal, making it harder (but not impossible) for bacteria to enter the body. Because of the cuff, most bloodstream infections in people with tunneled catheters are caused by bacteria that travel through the *inside* of the catheter rather than along its outer surfaces; for this reason, it is very important to avoid touching the catheter hub or port (where the medication line is attached). Bacteria can

also infect the skin and soft tissue surrounding the exit site, which are not protected by the cuff.

It is impossible to completely prevent catheter-related infections, but there are steps you can take to reduce the chances of one occurring.

- Careful hygiene can lower the likelihood of bacteria infecting the skin at the exit site or entering the bloodstream through the catheter.
- Using "clean" technique (see below) when changing dressings, handling the catheter, or preparing the medication can keep bacterial levels down.
- Regularly inspecting for signs of infection and calling your doctor immediately if you notice anything unusual can keep infections from getting worse.

Clean technique is used to help minimize the number of bacteria on your hands and on the supplies you use for catheter care.

Clean technique involves:

- Keeping a clean work surface
- Thorough hand washing before handling the catheter or beginning drug preparation
- Wearing gloves and a mask, if necessary
- Keeping sterile items from touching non-sterile ones (such as fingers and clothing)
- Avoiding contact with the catheter hub or port

Other elements of good catheter care

- Change dressings regularly (or immediately, if accidentally soiled) to prevent the buildup of bacteria
- Clean and disinfect the catheter and exit site during dressing changes
- Store and prepare your medication according to directions
- Do not reuse any single-use or disposable supplies (including vials, syringes, needles, connectors, needleless devices, bandages, etc.)
- Use alcohol wipes to clean exposed ports and vial stoppers before use.

Be alert for signs of infection. Call your doctor at once if you feel unusually weak or tired, or if you have a fever. If you notice any redness, tenderness, warmth, firmness or discharge of any color at or near the exit site of your catheter, call your doctor immediately. Vigilance is the key to beating bloodstream infections.

Source: *Beat the BSI*, #FLO07238, May 2008, Gilead Sciences.



Answers to Brain Power on page 5:
 1. split level, 2. long underwear, 3. circles under the eyes, 4. G.I. overseas,
 5. backward glance, 6. three degrees below zero.

CREATE A STRATEGY TO TACKLE STAIRS

The most common mistake people make is holding their breath and rushing up the stairs. This will only make your breathlessness worse.

Walking up and down stairs is something we all take for granted, but it is one of the hardest “everyday activities” for people with chronic lung disease to manage.

Some people simply rearrange their household and sleep downstairs to avoid the problem, and others avoid their favorite activities like going to the theater or to the football stadium to see their favorite team play because the stairs are a problem.

Here are a few tips to help you learn how to master those stairs.

1. Always use the hand rail (if there is one)
2. If you use any other walking aids, then continue to use it as you climb up or come down the stairs.
3. Before you begin, look at the stairs and work out how you can go up the shortest way possible. For example, if there are two flights, walk up the inside of the staircase, rather than the outside, which will be the longer distance.
4. Put your whole foot flat on each step. This relieves pressure on your calf muscles, and also conserves energy.
5. Start your breathing at the bottom of the stairs. The most common mistake people make is holding their breath and rushing up the stairs. This will only make your breathlessness worse.
6. Breathe in time with your steps. Relax. Breathe out with pursed lips. Breathe in over one step and out over two steps. Your expiration should be longer than your inspiration
7. Go as slow as you can – the first few times, get your partner or therapist to walk in front of you to slow you down.
8. If you have two flights to go up, put a chair on the landing so you can rest on your way up the stairs.

Source: *Lung Net*, The Australian Lung Foundation.

PLANS PROCEED FOR MEETING PROGRAMS



Program topics for the 2010 meetings were selected from a survey conducted at the June meeting, and Nancy has been contacting potential speakers. Currently, confirmations have been received from the February and April meetings' presenters.

February 13th Bill Winter, Attorney
Health Care Directives

April 10th Karen Buck, RRT
Breathing Lesson
& Harmonica
Techniques

June 12th (Tentative)
Traveling w/ Portable
Oxygen Concentrators

August 14th (Tentative)
Coordinating with ERs
and EMTs

October 9th (Tentative)
Sleep Disorders

All of these meetings will be held at the Riverton Public Library from 1 – 3 PM on the specified dates.

We must take fear and by love change it into hope. ~ Maya Angelou ~

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PHA's National
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Disclaimer

We encourage readers to discuss their healthcare with their doctors. This newsletter is intended only to provide information on PH/PPH and not to provide medical advice on personal health matters, which should be obtained directly from a physician.

PHA and WY PH Support Group will not be responsible for readers' actions taken as a result of their interpretation of information contained in this newsletter.

Boost your brainpower by solving these puzzles. See if you can uncover the meaning in these words, letters, symbols and their positions. Each puzzle represents a common word, phrase, expression, person, place or event.

1	LE VEL	2	WEAR LONG	3	i i o o
4	G.I. C C C C C C C	5	ECNALG	6	0 B.S. M.D. PH.D

Fill in the grid with digits in such a manner that every row, every column and every 3x3 box accommodates the digits 1 - 9, without repeating any.

		4	8		9	2	7	6
	2	7			6			
		3			2			4
		8			1		9	
		5		9		8		
2	9			8	3	4		5
		2		1		5		
	3	1	9			6	2	
6				2	8		4	7