

RPE Scale & Huff Cough

A quick reference for the Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) scale to pace your activity, plus step-by-step instructions for the huff cough technique to help clear mucus.

RATING OF PERCEIVED EXERTION (RPE)

0	Rest	
1	Really Easy	
2	Easy	
3	Moderate	
4	Challenging	TARGET
5	Hard	TARGET
6	Harder	TARGET
7	Really Hard	
8	Really, Really Hard	
9	Maximum	

Target zone for building strength: 4 to 6 (Challenging to Harder). Aim for breathlessness and fatigue in this range after exercise — not gasping for air.

PURSED-LIP BREATHING

In through your nose, out through pursed lips — like blowing bubbles. Use it whenever you exercise to keep breathing controlled.

HOW TO USE THIS SCALE

- Use RPE to guide how hard you work during activity and exercise.
- After exercising, check your breathlessness and fatigue. Aim for **4–6**.
- You should feel slightly short of breath — **not gasping for air**.
- Anything less than 4 usually means you are not working hard enough to build muscle strength.
- If you hit 7 or higher, ease up, rest, and use pursed-lip breathing until you recover.

REMEMBER

Some days you will not be able to do as much as the day before — that is okay. Do what you can, then try to build again the next day.

EXERCISE BUDDY (OPTIONAL)

A family member, friend, neighbor, or co-worker can help you stay committed and keep activity from getting boring.

Huff Cough — Clear Mucus

If you have a more productive cough than usual, use the **huff cough** to help clear mucus (phlegm) from your lungs. It moves mucus without tiring you out the way a hard, normal cough can.

1**Slow your breathing**

Do pursed-lip breathing three or four times to settle and slow your breath.

2**Take a deep belly breath**

Let your belly push out as you inhale slowly and deeply. Fill your lungs almost all the way.

3**Hold briefly**

Hold your breath while you count to 4.

4**Open your airway**

Tilt your chin up and open your lips.

5**Huff the air out**

Use your belly to push the air out in short, quick bursts — sounding like *“huh, huh, huh.”*

STAY HYDRATED

Drink water through the day.
Thinner mucus is easier to clear.

ADD HUMIDITY

Moist air can make mucus less sticky. Use a humidifier if your care team agrees.

AFTER THE HUFFS

Return to normal breathing. Do not keep holding your breath once the huffs are done.

Why huff instead of a hard cough? Short “huh” bursts move mucus up without the strain of a forceful cough — so you can clear your airways and keep going with less fatigue.