

# A Guide to Airway Clearance Techniques in Babies



- There are several different airway clearance techniques, but only some of them can be used in babies.
- This is because babies cannot cough or do breathing exercises to command, and so treatment has to be given to them.
- The most common chest clearance treatment used for babies in the UK is postural drainage and percussion.



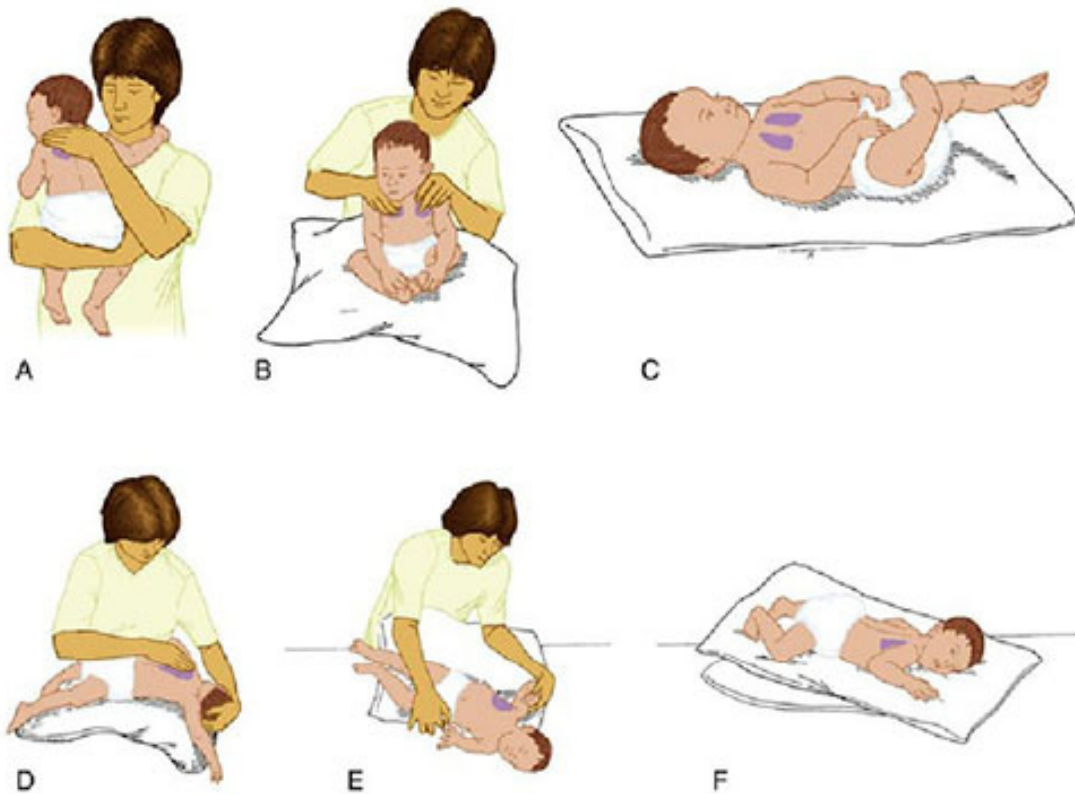
## Postural Drainage

Postural drainage (PD), uses different body positions to help the drainage of secretions from particular areas of the lungs.

The total treatment time for each session is usually about 15 minutes (and usually consists of three or four positions for a few minutes each). This, however, can vary.

The easiest way to give treatment is normally with your baby lying on a pillow on your lap. This allows you to ensure your baby's head is fully supported. Your physio will advise which positions are best for your baby.

Treatment should always be given before a feed to prevent the risk of reflux (regurgitation) of feed.



## Percussion

This technique is also known as chest clapping, and is used to help loosen secretions. In babies it is usually combined with postural drainage positions.

A cupped hand (image below) should be used over a towel/piece of clothing and firmly "pat" across your child's chest. This may be shown to you by your Physiotherapist.

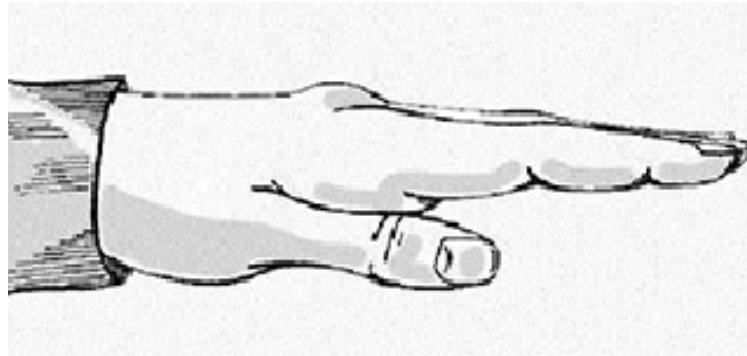
Many babies quite enjoy having percussion and it is not painful or uncomfortable.



## Vibrations and Shaking

Again, this is a technique that can be used in conjunction with Postural Drainage.

This involves placing your hands over the child's chest wall and creating a fine shaking/vibrating motion with your hands, as the child breathes out. This can also help to loosen and move secretions and may cause your child to have a cough. This is also something that will be demonstrated by your Physiotherapist.



**Correct Hand Position for Vibration**

## Physical Activity

Physical activity, including exercise, is very important as it helps to keep the chest clear.

It can also help to identify whether the chest is clear or not (the child may breathe more deeply and if there is mucus in the lungs it can often be heard).

Although babies cannot exercise themselves, it is very important that physical activity is encouraged from the very beginning.

General play activities such as bouncing (e.g. on a gym ball or on your lap) and rolling on a mat can be started straight away. As the baby grows, more and more activities can be introduced.



## Further information

For more information regarding secretion clearance, please speak to your child's Physiotherapist.

This leaflet has been designed as a reminder for common techniques recommended by Physiotherapists, please do not use this as a guide to treat your child without first receiving Physiotherapy advice.

All information used in this leaflet was gained from the Cystic Fibrosis Trust (2017)- Physiotherapy Airway Clearance techniques. This can be accessed via the CF trust website: [www.cysticfibrosis.org.uk](http://www.cysticfibrosis.org.uk)

**If you have any comments about this leaflet or the service you have received you can contact :**

**Physiotherapy  
Acute Inpatient therapy  
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**Telephone No: 01422 224198**

[www.cht.nhs.uk](http://www.cht.nhs.uk)

**If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.**

Potřebujete-li tyto informace v jiném formátu nebo jazyce, obraťte se prosím na výše uvedené oddělení

Jeżeli są Państwo zainteresowani otrzymaniem tych informacji w innym formacie lub wersji językowej, prosimy skontaktować się z nami, korzystając z ww. danych kontaktowych

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