

## What causes thick mucus production?

Thick mucus production is a common problem among patients with ALS. This is due to increased production of secretions, difficulty swallowing, medication side-effects, mouth breathing, and/or decreased hydration.

### Tips to manage thick secretions:

- Increase daily water intake either by mouth or through a feeding tube.
- Utilize the humidifier on your breathing device.
- Add an in-room humidifier.
- Use a PEP device two to four times a day.
- Utilize cough assist two to four times a day.
- Drink pineapple or papaya juice.
- Reduce dairy intake, which can worsen secretions.
- Practice consistent and frequent oral care.
- Review your medications with your doctor and evaluate for any medications that could be causing over-drying.

## Medications Used for Thick Mucus

- Over-the-counter mucolytics such as guaifenesin (Mucinex)
- Prescription medications through a nebulizer

You should discuss medication options with your doctor prior to starting any new medications.

## PEP Device

A PEP device is an airway-clearing device that facilitates the movement of mucus. You may hear it referred to as a Flutter® or an Acapella® device. One important consideration is that a patient needs to have the coordination and facial strength to operate the device. It is important to clean the device daily.

*An ineffective cough can increase your risk of respiratory infections. It is important to proactively utilize use your cough assist to decrease your risk.*



## Cough Augmentation

A cough assist machine is one of the most effective methods to assist in clearing retained secretions. It slowly blows air through a tube, into a mouthpiece or mask, and then into the mouth as the patient breathes in. Then, as the patient exhales, it quickly uses a suction mechanism to pull air and assist in providing a forceful cough. This productive cough assists in mobilizing retained secretions. The device is obtained through a durable medical equipment company through prescription. If needed, the pressure settings on the device can be changed by your respiratory therapist.

