# Gregory W. Fulton ALS Center Thick Mucus



### 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**

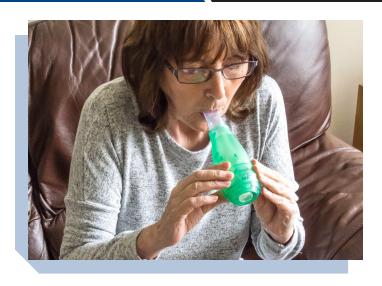
- Over-the-counter mucolytics such as guaifenesin (Mucinex)
- Prescription medications through a nebulizer

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.

