Introduction
You will be given an incentive spirometer to use before and after your surgery. This is a breathing device that can help you take deep and slow breaths. Using an incentive spirometer can help prevent infections after surgery. We take many breaths every hour. They usually happen naturally on their own. We are not aware that we are doing it. The size of these normal breaths is about 500 ml or 1/2 liter.

When you are sick, the breaths you take are smaller than normal because of pain and discomfort. Taking smaller breaths can lead to infections such as pneumonia. Using your incentive spirometer will help you take deeper breaths and provide a way to measure the size of your breaths. Practicing good oral care is another way to help prevent pneumonia.

This reference summary explains the parts of the incentive spirometer. The reference summary also explains how to use the device before and after your surgery. It also explains oral care.

What is an Incentive Spirometer?
It can be harder to breathe while recovering from certain surgeries. An incentive spirometer is a deep breathing device that can help you expand or open up your lungs to prevent complications such as pneumonia.

An incentive spirometer encourages deep breathing and provides visual feedback. It can help you maintain and improve how well your lungs work.
The incentive spirometer is made of the following parts:

- A plastic mouthpiece attached to tubing.
- The flow indicator, which has a yellow flow cup inside the column with the words BEST, BETTER and GOOD on the outside.
- The main chamber. This has a white piston inside a column with numbers on the outside. It measures how deep your breaths are and how much your lungs are expanding. Your breathing will raise an indicator towards the top of the column.
- A gold incentive slider used to mark the size of your current breath size.

**Using Your Incentive Spirometer**

When you use the incentive spirometer, sit up as straight as possible in bed, on the edge of your bed or in a chair. The incentive spirometer can be used in a health care facility or at home. Hold the incentive spirometer upright in front of you. Make sure the column with the words BEST, BETTER and GOOD is facing you. Do not tilt your head.

First, blow out all of the air in your lungs. Then, place the mouthpiece in your mouth. Seal your lips around it tightly. Breathe in as slowly and deeply as possible through the mouthpiece. When you inhale, keep the yellow cup in the BEST to BETTER flow range. The white piston moves up slowly when you breathe in. It measures how deep your breaths are and how much your lungs expand. Your breathing will raise the indicator towards the top of the column.

After you inhale, remove the mouthpiece and hold your breath for at least 5 seconds. Then exhale. The white piston will fall to the bottom of the column, or zero. Rest for a few seconds. Repeat the breathing exercise at least 10 times every 2 hours while you are awake. If you can, do the breathing exercise every hour while you are awake. A set of 10 breathing exercises is called a breathing session.
Cough after each breathing session. This will help clear your lungs. If you have an abdominal incision, hold a pillow against the incision area when you cough. Take your time with your breathing exercises. Slow down if you feel dizzy or lightheaded.

Your doctor, respiratory therapist, or nurse will discuss any goals they may want you to achieve based on your specific needs. The gold incentive slider provides a visual way to help you reach your goal. If you are able to surpass this goal, you should move the slider a little higher. This will become your new goal. Everyone should be able to do 500 ml. A deep breath would be 1000 ml or better. Clean the incentive spirometer with soap and water every time that you use it.

**Oral Care**

Good oral care can help prevent infections such as pneumonia. Oral care means keeping your mouth healthy by using mouthwash and brushing and flossing your teeth. These activities should be done 2 times a day before and after surgery. You will use a regular mouthwash before and after surgery. You may be given a Chlorhexidine, or CHG, mouthwash. Follow your health care provider's instructions on how to use the CHG mouthwash.

Call your health care team if you have any questions or concerns about using your incentive spirometer or doing oral care.

**Summary**

Using your incentive spirometer will help you practice deep breathing. This can open your lungs and help prevent pneumonia after your surgery. You should use the incentive spirometer at least 10 times every 2 hours while you are awake. If you can, do the breathing exercise every hour while you are awake. A set of 10 breathing exercises is called a breathing session. Cough after each breathing session. This will help clear your lungs. If you have an abdominal incision, hold a pillow against the incision area when you cough.

Good oral care can reduce the risk of infections such as pneumonia. Oral care means keeping your mouth healthy by using mouthwash and brushing and flossing your teeth. These activities should be done 2 times a day before and after your surgery.