**Incentive Spirometer**

**Introduction**

An incentive spirometer is an instrument that helps patients expand and clear their lungs. Using an incentive spirometer after surgery will help you keep your lungs clear. The incentive spirometer will also help keep your lungs active when you are recovering from surgery or pneumonia.

This reference summary explains how to use an incentive spirometer.

**Incentive Spirometer**

This is what an incentive spirometer looks like.

You will breathe in slowly through the mouthpiece. As you breathe, the piston will raise toward the top of the column.

The higher the indicator rises, the deeper your breaths and the greater the expansion of your lungs.

**Why Use It**

Patients recovering from major surgeries, pneumonia, or patients who were on a respirator, tend not to breathe very deeply. This causes parts of the lungs to collapse. The technical term for this is atelectasis.

The bigger the atelectasis area, the more difficult it is to breathe. This increases the chances of contracting an infection. Without deep breathing and coughing, sputum or secretion from the lungs can pool in the lungs, making breathing more difficult and pneumonias more likely. A lung infection or pneumonia is usually treatable with antibiotics, but can be fatal in some cases. In order to prevent these complications it is very important to ‘exercise’ the lungs, and cough out sputum.
An incentive spirometer measures how deep a patient can breathe and challenges the patient to breathe even deeper.

How to Use It

If possible, sit on the edge of your bed. If this is too difficult, sit up as far as you can in bed. Hold the incentive spirometer in an upright position.

1. Place the mouthpiece in your mouth and seal your lips around it tightly.
2. Breathe in slowly, and as deeply as possible, raising the yellow piston toward the top of the column. The yellow coach indicator should rise to the blue outlined area.
3. Hold your breath for at least five seconds and as long as possible, then allow the piston to fall to the bottom of the column.

Rest for a few seconds, then repeat the above breathing exercise at least 10 times every hour that you are awake. The set of 10 breathing exercises is called a breathing session.

After each set of 10 deep breaths, practice coughing. This will help ensure that your lungs are clear. If you have an incision, support your incision when coughing by placing a pillow firmly against it.

On the side of the spirometer there is a yellow indicator that you can move up and down. After each breathing session, position this indicator so that it shows your highest mark, then use the mark as a goal to work toward during each future repetition.

Ask your nurse or doctor for how long you should use the spirometer and when you should stop using it. You may be given a spirometer to take home so you can continue the breathing exercises after you leave the hospital.
Conclusion
Surgery, lung infections, and time spent on a respirator increase the chances of lung collapse and pneumonia.

An incentive spirometer allows you to exercise the lungs, hasten recovery, and prevent potentially serious complications.