Intermittent Positive Pressure Breathing (IPPB) known as “The Bird”
The treatment explained
What it is:

“The Bird” is a machine that will help you take a deep breath in, which may help you to cough and clear sputum from your lungs. Your physiotherapist may choose to use “The Bird” as part of your treatment when you are unable to take a deep breath due to weakness, fatigue or drowsiness.

It is commonly used with patients who:

- have had surgery or trauma to the chest or abdomen where pain prevents them from taking a breath in
- have an area of lung collapse due to excess sputum
- have an acute flare-up of their breathing problem and are too weak to have an effective cough

Why it is needed:

When patients become weak, fatigued or drowsy, it can become difficult to take deep breaths as this is hard work and muscles become tired. The low volume
and rate of breathing can lead to a build-up of waste gas (carbon dioxide) and not enough oxygen getting into your blood. Coughing to clear sputum becomes especially difficult, as a large breath in is required in order to have a big cough.

Using “The Bird” can:

- Increase the volume of a breath in
- Make it easier to take a large breath in
- Improve the levels of oxygen and carbon dioxide in your blood
- Support weak inspiratory muscles
- Assist in the delivery of aerosol medication (nebulisers)
- Assist in clearing sputum from the lungs

Exercise and exertion can be an equally as effective treatment as using “The Bird”. However, there are situations where fatigue, weakness and drowsiness make “The Bird” an appropriate treatment.
What the machine does:

“The Bird” is a machine that delivers a form of Intermittent Positive Pressure Breathing (IPPB). This means that the machine provides short-term mechanical ventilation of a specified positive pressure. The machine will push a mixture of air and oxygen into your lungs via a facemask, mouth piece or a connection to your tracheostomy. The mixture of air and oxygen is slightly humidified to avoid having a drying effect on your lungs. As you start to take a breath in, the machine will take over and you will feel a flow of air into your lungs. The machine will only give you a large breath in once you have started to take the breath in yourself. It can feel a bit odd to start with, and may take a couple of practice breaths with your physiotherapist adjusting the machine settings until it feels comfortable.

The process – what to expect:

Your physiotherapist will ensure that you have had any pain relief (if necessary) prior to treatment and will ask you to adopt a certain position according to the aims of the treatment.

Your physiotherapist will set up the machine near your bed space, and will demonstrate how the
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machine works. They will give you the mouthpiece or hold the facemask in place, and then ask you to take a breath and allow the machine to fill your lungs. You will need to breathe out passively.

The treatment will last as long as is required to safely gain an effective treatment. Your physiotherapist may use some manual techniques (such as tapping you on the back or shaking your ribs) to make the treatment more effective.

Your physiotherapist will monitor you throughout your treatment to ensure your safety. It may feel uncomfortable initially; you may feel light headed or swallow some air. If you experience any of these symptoms please discuss them with your physiotherapist.

Your physiotherapist is trained in the correct use of “The Bird” and will only introduce this treatment option if it is suitable. In some cases, your physiotherapist will discuss the use of the “The Bird” with the medical team prior to commencing the treatment. You will continue your normal treatment i.e. medications, nebulisers, antibiotics, inhalers, alongside the use of “The Bird”.

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References:


Joyce K et al (2011) *Physiotherapy guidelines for the Use of Intermittent Positive Pressure Breathing with Adult Patients (Bird Mark 7 device).* North Bristol Trust guidelines.

NHS Constitution. Information on your rights and responsibilities. Available at [www.nhs.uk/aboutnhs/constitution](http://www.nhs.uk/aboutnhs/constitution)
If you or the individual you are caring for need support reading this leaflet please ask a member of staff for advice.

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