

Breath Buddy™ Activity Guide

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Why Is Breathing Well So Significant?

This comfortable, adjustable vest is an important tool for providing deep-pressure input to the major muscle groups used in breathing. Regular use while working on stronger breathing muscles facilitates a more mature respiration pattern. Additionally, some people like Breath Buddy because the “huggy” input calms children, similar to swaddling a baby.

Children who have processing issues frequently have a condition called “low muscle tone.” This can impact breathing muscles. Frequently, this means that, rather than using the diaphragm for breathing, the individual breaths shallowly. This puts the whole body on alert, making it difficult to attend and focus.

Good breathing can improve the clarity of speech. Certain sounds are based on the ability to grade respiration such as f, v, s, and z. Respiration is essential for putting the ending sounds on words.

Ironically, good breath support can even impact language production. It can make the difference between speaking in short phrases and speaking in full sentences.

In general, good respiration creates calm people, improves speech and improves language. The breathing products on these pages are frequently used by:

- Individuals diagnosed with attention and focus issues
- Children that have frequent respiratory infections
- Individuals with autistic spectrum disorders
- Those with speech delays
- Those with trouble eating or drinking
- Individuals that drool
- Individuals trying to use language but require refocus
- Classrooms where it seems the whole class needs calming down



What Can Be Done?

Improving Respiration

Use Breath Buddy with children who have low muscle tone. You will want to observe respiration patterns at rest and during activities, as well as document the baseline for functional outcomes such as:

- Improving f, v, s, and z sounds
- Decreasing vocal fry
- Improving concentration and focus
- Decreasing upper-chest colds
- Decreasing drooling
- Improving sensory modulation
- Improving length of utterances
- Improving speech intelligibility
- And other goals relevant to the child

Some therapists also like to document baselines on the number of seconds a child can make a vowel sound, such as “eeeeeee.” Other measures include upper-chest and lower-chest expansion when taking a large breath, using a simple tailor’s tape measure.

Or, count the number of seconds the child is able to continually blow a whistle. Some therapists also use pediatric spirometers or peak flow meters, as those tools are useful in medical documentation. Use these tools along with functional outcomes to measure progress.

Calming Children

Products that hug and squeeze are very calming to some children, as they activate the deep-pressure receptors in the body. Breath Buddy is great for some children that are easily distracted, hyperactive, or lacking concentration. If the individual responds well to this input, Breath Buddy can be worn under or on top of clothing.

General Information and Use

Fit:

Breath Buddy is designed to fit over the accessory muscles that assist in breathing, as well as provide deep-pressure input to the diaphragm. The accessory muscles include the sternocleidomastoid, scalenes, pectoralis major, pectoralis minor, serratus anterior, trapezius, and erector spinae muscles. This means the vest is properly fitted when the front forms a V starting where the neck joins the torso. Use the front VELCRO® to secure Breath Buddy while pulling the lower band, so that the band crosses the bottom of the ribs horizontally, activating the diaphragm. The back V may be adjusted so that in longer children the horizontal band crosses the diaphragm. Fit should be comfortable, adding slight, even pressure to the body.

Ages:

Age is less relevant than size of the child. This product is not recommended for children under the age of 5, and even some adolescents can wear the vest comfortably. If possible, you may try the vest on yourself prior to starting with a child, so that you experience the amount of resistance or pressure that is applied to the muscles.

Safety:

This product is not designed for hi-tone children or those with life-threatening respiration issues. Adult supervision is a must.

Length of Time:

Suggested wearing duration is not to exceed 20 minutes, unless a physical therapist or occupational therapist recommends otherwise. Also, if the child complains of fatigue or discomfort, remove the vest and gradually increase the wearing time.

Activities

Breath Buddy can be used during activities that build a child's trunk strength, such as riding a scooter board in the prone position, yoga, "flying" on suspended equipment such as swings, using a zipline, or working on a physio-ball.

Quieter activities — such as positioning the child with pillows so his/her posture is slightly flexed with the head supported — are great opportunities to use the Breath Buddy. Work on silly sounds, raspberries, or mouth toys.

Observe where the child's chest is not expanding. If you have craniosacral skills or neurodevelopmental training, you may want to facilitate expansion using those techniques as well.

Favorite Products That Can Be Used With Breath Buddy:

Blow Fish, Blow!	Recorders
Cola Whistle Pipes	Air Action Blow Guns
Mighty Mouth Games	Whistle KitKazoos
Siren Whistles	Mouth Music
Bubbles	And many more!

Favorite Music To Be Used With Breath Buddy:

Say G'Day!, By Genieve Jereb OT

No Worries, By Genieve Jereb OT

Songames, By Audrey Lande OT and Bob Wiz

Joy Stories, (calming deep breathing) by Joy Frost, educator and winner of Dr Toy 10 Best Award

The Miracle Is You (calming deep breathing), by Debbie Milan OT

Our Favorite Resources:

Books:

M.O.R.E. Integrating the Mouth With Sensory and Postural Functions,
By Patricia Oetter, OTR, Eileen Richter, OTR, and Sheila Frick, OTR.

Mouth Madness,
by Catherine Orr, OTR.

Oral Motor Techniques in Articulation & Phonological Therapy,
by Pam Marshalla, SLP.

Out of The Mouths of Babes – Discovering the Developmental Significance of the Mouth,
by Patricia Oetter, OTR, Eileen Richter, OTR, Sheila Frick, OTR, and Ron Frick, Parent.

The Out-Of-Sync Child,
by Carol Stock Kranowitz.

Supplies:

Integrations Catalog: www.integrationscatalog.com or 800.622.0638

Abilitations Catalog: www.abilitations.com or 800.850.8602