

Breathing Exercises

Complete Breath:

Proper breathing is slow, deep and rhythmic. Deep means that the initial movement is from the abdomen. When you breathe, the movement starts in the low abdomen and then moves up to the chest. To check your breathing, put one hand on your low abdomen and one on your chest and take a deep breath. What do you notice? If your chest rises up first you are probably using your neck muscles to breathe, not your diaphragm. Incorrect breathing contributes to neck and shoulder tension, shortness of breath, digestive concerns, gastric reflux and heart burn and a host of other health concerns.

I. Benefits:

The Complete Breath

- ✓ purifies the bloodstream
- ✓ develops chest and diaphragm
- ✓ strengthens lungs, thorax and abdomen
- ✓ increases resistance to colds
- ✓ aids digestion
- ✓ clears up phlegm
- ✓ helps to lift depression
- ✓ calms the nervous system

II. Technique:

1. Sit in a comfortable cross-legged position or in a chair.
2. Straighten your back, which will straighten your thorax for easier breathing.
3. Inhale slowly through the nose, breathing deeply, consciously looking upward.
4. Take five seconds to fill the lower part of the lungs, expanding the ribs and pushing the abdomen out.
5. Hold the breath for 1-5 seconds.
6. Exhale slowly until you have emptied the lungs, looking downward.
7. Repeat 4-5 times more.
8. It is recommended that you practice the complete breath technique 5 – 10 minutes a day, for about 3 months, or as recommended by your Naturopathic Doctor. It is also a great technique to do when you are stopped at a stop sign, red light or standing in line.

III. Dos and Don'ts

- DO establish a rhythmic rise and fall of your abdomen, to promote regular breathing.
- DO attempt to breathe inaudibly after you have gotten the knack of deep breathing.
- DO concentrate on your breathing alone, with your eyes closed, if you wish. It serves to do the technique better but it is also a preparation for meditation.
- DO push your abdomen out as you breathe in and pull the abdomen in as you breathe out.
- Do give an extra snort as you exhale to rid yourself of stale waste-matter in the bottom of the lungs.

- DO NOT slump. For maximum efficiency the thorax must be straight.

Alternate Nostril Breath:

Alternate nostril breathing is an effective way to calm the body and to relax. It is ideal to do as you are going to sleep or in the middle of the day to assist you in calming your mind and relaxing.

I. Benefits

- ✓ calming effect on the nervous system
- ✓ purifies the bloodstream and aerates the lungs
- ✓ improves digestion and appetite
- ✓ helps to overcome insomnia
- ✓ soothes headaches
- ✓ helps to overcome insomnia
- ✓ helps to free the mind of anxiety and depression

II. Technique:

1. Sit in a comfortable cross-legged position, back straight or lie flat on your back.
2. Raise your RIGHT hand and place your ring finger against your LEFT nostril, closing it off.
3. Inhale deeply and slowly through the RIGHT nostril to the count of four.
4. Close off the RIGHT nostril with your thumb and retain the breath for 1-4 seconds.
5. Open the LEFT nostril and exhale to the count of 4-8 seconds. The longer you can make the exhalation, the better. Concentrate on completely emptying the lungs.
6. Breathe in through that same LEFT nostril to the count of 4.
7. Close off the nostril with the ring finger again and hold to the count of 1-4 seconds.
8. Exhale through the RIGHT nostril to the count of 4-8 seconds. This makes up one round.
9. Repeat these rounds of alternate nostril breathing five more times
10. Practise a ratio of 4:4:8, if at all possible. Increase this to 8:4:8 eventually, then 8:8:8, after some months.

III. Dos and Don'ts:

- DO practice whenever you need calming - if you are nervous, upset or irritable.
- DO make the breathing rhythmic, smooth and slow.
- DO NOT push yourself with the holding position or by increasing the count.

The Cleansing Breath:

The cleansing breath is a quick and efficient technique to relax the nervous system when you are stressed or upset. It is helpful when used on a daily basis to strengthen the body organs. During the cleansing breath you are listening for a deep, strong, full exhalation that is coming from the base of your abdomen.

I. Benefits:

- ✓ clears lungs, sinuses and nasal passages
- ✓ aids digestion
- ✓ purifies the bloodstream and clears the head
- ✓ relieves colds
- ✓ strengthens the lungs, thorax and abdomen
- ✓ stimulates the liver, spleen and pancreas
- ✓ tones the nervous system

II. Technique:

1. Inhale deeply, pushing the abdomen out, taking in as much air as possible in the space of 1 second.
2. Tighten your abdomen in forcefully to expel the air through the nostrils.
3. Inhale again by pushing the abdomen out and letting the air rush back into the lungs.
4. The whole process, inhalation and exhalation, should take not much more than 1-1/2 seconds. Both should be forceful and will be quite audible.
5. Do five to ten cleansing breaths a day, or as recommended by your Naturopathic Doctor.

III. Dos and Don'ts

- DO push the abdomen out as far as you can as you inhale.
- DO NOT exhale consciously, but let the action of the abdomen do it for you.