

Breathing Exercises

I. 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.

Benefits:

- ✓ 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.