

Tips for Healthy Breathing

- 1. Take note of your breathing regularly.** Gain awareness of how you take in air throughout the day.
- 2. Sit up straighter, stretch.** Become aware of where you are tensing your body.
- 3. Breathe through your nose.** The nose has defense mechanisms that prevent impurities and excessively cold air from entering the body. It also can detect poisonous gases that could be harmful. Pathogens can enter the lungs through mouth breathing — so keep your mouth closed and let your nose do the work.
- 4. When you inhale, push your stomach forward gently,** and breathe through as though you are filling your stomach. This is called abdominal breathing.
- 5. When you exhale, breathe out slowly,** and gently allow your stomach to return to its normal position.
- 6. Notice the difference between shallow breathing (which stops at the chest) and abdominal breathing.** Abdominal breathing fills the lower lobes of the lungs, and it massages the abdominal organs by the movements of the diaphragm.

In addition to making these changes in your regular breathing style, you can further optimize breathing by practicing a few minutes of deep or complete breathing every day. The complete breathe, which is practiced in yoga, involves the entire respiratory system and employs all of the muscles.

Here are some simple instructions on deep breathing:

- Sit in a meditative position, like the lotus position, or in a chair with your spine straight.
- Inhale slowly until your lungs are filled to capacity.
- At the end of the inhalation, pause for a count of two.
- Exhale slowly, smoothly and completely. Pause at the end of the exhalation as well.
- When you first begin, don't take too full a breath at once. Start by breathing to the count of four, pausing for the count of two, and exhaling to the count of four.
- During the first week, don't take more than 5-6 deep breaths at one time as this could cause hyperventilation.
- With practice, you will enlarge your lung capacity and be able to inhale more air than you have previously.

This very simple change can make a profound difference in your health, vitality and quality of life. Why not start right now? Sit up straight. Breathe deeply. Now go live a long and healthy life!

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