

BREATHING FOR HEALTH

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Full Chest and Abdominal Breathing

This method is simply a deepening of the breath. Take slow, deep, rhythmic breaths through the nose. When the diaphragm drops down, the abdomen is expanded allowing the air to rush into the vacuum created in the lungs.

Then the chest cavity is expanded, allowing the lungs to fill completely. This is followed by a slow, even exhalation which empties the lungs completely.

This simple breath practice done slowly and fully, with intention, concentration and relaxation activates all of the primary benefits of therapeutic breath practice. In Qigong and Pranayama the breath is retained for additional benefit.

Relaxation

Begin by taking slow deep breaths. Repeat these messages to yourself.

"My hands and arms are heavy and warm" (5 times).

"My feet and legs are heavy and warm" (5 times).

"My abdomen is warm and comfortable" (5 times).

"My breathing is deep and even" (10 times).

"My heartbeat is calm and regular" (10 times). "My forehead is cool" (5 times).

"When I open my eyes, I will remain relaxed and refreshed" (3 times).

Application Suggestions:

Health maintenance: 2 to 3 sessions per day.

Health enhancement: 6 to 10 sessions per day.

Disease intervention: Start slowly and build up to 10 to 15 sessions per day. Until you are well you have time to do this.

Getting started: 2 to 3 sessions per day.

Alternate Nostril Breathing

Using your thumb on your right nostril and your pinky and third finger (the finger right next to your pinky finger), hold your right nostril closed and inhale up your left nostril. Pause, and while your lungs are full of air, switch your fingers so that your left nostril is closed. Then exhale out your right nostril. Then inhale up your right nostril, pause, and again while your lungs are full of air, switch your fingers so that your right nostril is closed. Exhale. Repeat this process about 12 times. This breath is often done in preparation for deep relaxation or meditation.

You will notice that usually one or the other of the nostrils is more open. If you breath on a small hand mirror, the patch of mist from one nostril will be larger than from the other.

The ancient practitioners of Yoga in India were aware of the significance of this and employed this knowledge to enhance health and consciousness. Western science did not notice this phenomena until the 1800's.

It has been found recently, through the application of current neuroscience, that the practice of alternate nostril breathing helps to balance the right and left hemispheres of the brain.

Applications Suggestions:

Health maintenance: 10 to 12 repetitions, 2 to 3 sessions per day.

Health enhancement: 10 to 12 repetitions, 4 to 6 sessions per day.

Disease intervention: Start slowly and build up to 15 to 20 repetitions, 8 to 10 sessions per day or up to even 100 repetitions in a single session.

Getting started: 10 to 12 repetitions, once or twice per day. Notice that this method is very quieting.