

Diaphragmatic Breathing

The diaphragm is a large, dome-shaped muscle located at the base of the lungs. Diaphragmatic breathing is meant to help you use the diaphragm correctly while breathing. This breathing technique offers several benefits to your body including reducing your blood pressure and heart rate and improving relaxation.

What is the diaphragm?

The diaphragm is the most efficient muscle for breathing. It's a large, dome-shaped muscle located at the base of your lungs. Your abdominal muscles help move the diaphragm and give you more power to empty your lungs.

What is diaphragmatic breathing?

Diaphragmatic breathing helps you use your diaphragm correctly while breathing to:

- Strengthen the diaphragm.
- Decrease the work of breathing by slowing your breathing rate.
- Decrease oxygen demand.
- Use less effort and energy to breathe.

During diaphragmatic breathing, you consciously use your diaphragm to take deep breaths. When you breathe normally, you don't use your lungs to their full capacity. Diaphragmatic breathing allows you to use your lungs at 100% capacity to increase lung efficiency.

What are other names for diaphragmatic breathing?

Diaphragmatic breathing is also known as:

- Abdominal breathing.
- Belly breathing.

What are the benefits of diaphragmatic breathing?

Diaphragmatic breathing offers several benefits to your body including:

- Helping you relax.
- Improving muscle function during exercises and preventing strain.
- Increasing how much oxygen is in your blood.
- Making it easier for your body to release gas waste from your lungs.
- Reducing blood pressure.
- Reducing heart rate.

How do I do diaphragmatic breathing exercises?

When you first learn the diaphragmatic breathing technique, it may be easier for you to follow the instructions lying down.

1. Lie on your back on a flat surface or in bed, with your knees bent and your head supported. You can use a pillow under your knees to support your legs.
2. Place one hand on your upper chest and the other just below your rib cage. This will allow you to feel your diaphragm move as you breathe.
3. Breathe in slowly through your nose so that your stomach moves out, causing your hand to rise. The hand on your chest should remain as still as possible.
4. Tighten your stomach muscles, so that your stomach moves in, causing your hand to lower as you exhale through pursed lips. The hand on your upper chest should remain as still as possible.

Diaphragmatic breathing technique (sitting)

As you gain more practice, you can try the diaphragmatic breathing technique while sitting in a chair.

To perform this exercise while sitting in a chair:

1. Sit comfortably, with your knees bent and your shoulders, head and neck relaxed.
2. Place one hand on your upper chest and the other just below your rib cage. This will allow you to feel your diaphragm move as you breathe.
3. Breathe in slowly through your nose so that your stomach moves out against your hand. The hand on your chest should remain as still as possible.
4. Tighten your stomach muscles, so that your stomach moves back in, as you exhale through pursed lips. The hand on your upper chest must remain as still as possible.

Do I need to practice diaphragmatic breathing?

Yes, practicing diaphragmatic breathing makes it easier. You may notice it takes an increased effort to use your diaphragm correctly. At first, you'll probably get tired while doing this exercise. But keep at it, because with continued practice diaphragmatic breathing will become automatic.

THE PHYSIOLOGICAL SIGH

HOW TO DO IT

The physiological sigh is a quick and effective breathing technique that naturally calms the nervous system. It works by regulating oxygen and carbon dioxide levels in the body, helping to ease feelings of stress and anxiety within moments.

How to Do It:

1. Take a long, deep inhale through your nose.
2. Without exhaling, take a second, shorter inhale to fully expand your lungs.
3. Slowly exhale through your mouth, emptying your lungs completely.

Repeat this process one or two times whenever you feel overwhelmed or anxious.



WHY IT WORKS

1. **Balances Oxygen and Carbon Dioxide:** Double-inhaling increases oxygen intake and removes carbon dioxide more efficiently, restoring balance and calming the body.
2. **Engages the Parasympathetic Nervous System:** The long, slow exhale helps activate the relaxation response, reducing the fight-or-flight sensation.
3. **Slows Heart Rate:** The extended exhale also naturally slows your heart rate, which can reduce feelings of stress and help restore a sense of control.

The physiological sigh is a simple tool for managing stress in the moment. It can be practised anywhere, making it ideal for immediate relief when you need to calm your body and mind.

What is 4 Square Breathing

I recently discovered this awesome breathing technique and thought of sharing this with you.

The Technique:

The very basic implementation of this technique is to inhale and exhale in equal proportions.

Step 1 : Inhale and take a deep breath for 4 secs. (count upto 4 while inhaling)

Step 2 : Hold the breath for 4 secs. (count upto 4 while holding)

Step 3 : Exhale completely for 4 secs (count upto 4)

Step 4 : Hold the breath for 4 secs. (count upto 4)

Repeat the process 5 - 6 times.

The Application:

This can be done anytime, several times a day. The best part is that you can practice this anytime of a day, wherever you are, at home, office, while travelling, watching TV etc.

Once you are accustomed with the 4 square breathing, you can take it to higher level of 5 square, 6 square, up to 10 square.

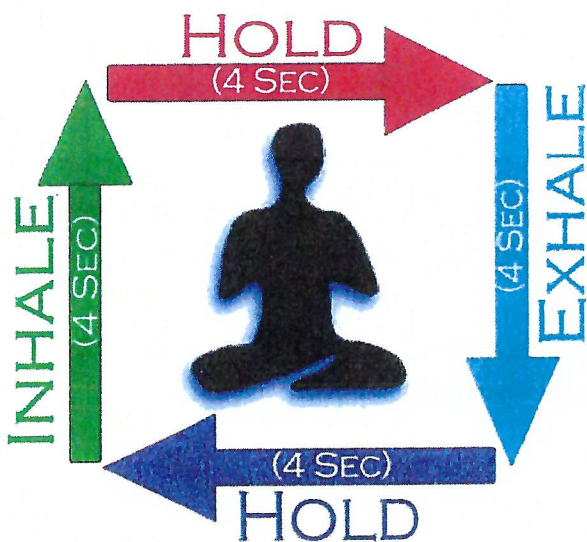
Advantages:

Release Anxiety and Stress : As this technique involves mind + body at the same time, it is a great stress buster. You can feel the calmness just after doing this exercise.

Controls breathing pattern : This greatly controls and organizes our pattern of breathing and in-turn controls our emotions and make us more responsive rather than reactive.

Improves Focus and Concentration : Do this exercise during small breaks when you are doing something important. This will greatly increase your concentration. Try it now and feel the difference right away.

Boosts brain energy : Great exercise for brain and nervous system. Calms and rejuvenates you within seconds.



4 square breathing technique



4 - 7 - 8 Breath

Relaxation Exercise

This is a very simple and useful tool to achieve general relaxation and to manage stress. Based on the breath technique designed by Dr. Andrew Weil.

The 4-7-8 Breathing Exercise is simple, takes almost no time, requires no equipment and can be done anywhere.

When practiced over time it effects significant changes to the physiology – it lowers heartrate, it lowers blood pressure, it improves digestion. It is a very powerful anti-anxiety measure, in fact it is much more powerful than anti-anxiety drugs that are commonly prescribed.

Great for Sleep

Use it to help you fall asleep. Even one cycle can be enough to help you nod off

STEPS

- Ideally sit with your back straight
- Place the tip of your tongue against the ridge behind and above your front teeth and keep it there through the whole exercise
- Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound.
- Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose to a mental count of **4**
- Hold your breath for a count of **7**
- Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound to a count of **8**
- This is one breath. Now inhale again and repeat the cycle three more times for a total of four breaths.

How often?

Do it at least twice a day. You cannot do it too frequently. Do not do more than four breaths at one time for the first month of practice. Later, if you wish, you can extend it to eight breaths. If you feel a little lightheaded when you first breathe this way, do not be concerned - it will pass.

Are the numbers important?

How fast or slow you breathe for each cycle is not important; the ratio of 4:7:8 is important. If you have trouble holding your breath, speed the exercise up but keep to the ratio of 4:7:8 for the three phases. With practice you can slow it all down and get used to inhaling and exhaling more and more deeply

Nadi shodhana pranayama, also known as **alternate nostril breathing**, is a powerful breathing exercise that helps calm the mind and balance the body's energy channels, or *nadis*. This technique is often used in yoga to prepare the mind for meditation.

How to practice alternate nostril breathing

1. **Find a comfortable posture.** Sit in a comfortable cross-legged position on the floor or in a chair with your spine straight and head erect. Rest your left hand on your left knee in *chin mudra* (the tips of the index finger and thumb touching).
2. **Form the hand mudra.** Raise your right hand toward your face. Fold your index and middle fingers toward your palm, keeping your thumb, ring finger, and pinky finger straight. This is called *nasika mudra* or *vishnu mudra*.
3. **Close the right nostril.** Gently press your right thumb against your right nostril to close it.
4. **Inhale through the left nostril.** Inhale slowly and deeply through your open left nostril.
5. **Exhale through the right nostril.** Remove your thumb from your right nostril and use your ring and pinky fingers to close the left nostril. Slowly exhale through your right nostril.
6. **Inhale through the right nostril.** Inhale slowly and deeply through the right nostril, which is still open.
7. **Exhale through the left nostril.** Close your right nostril with your thumb and exhale through the left nostril.

Repeat this cycle for 5–10 rounds. Remember to always inhale through the same nostril you just exhaled from.

