



BREATHING FOR HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Breathing is one of the most powerful tools for health the human being has. Breathing is normally something we do naturally and subconsciously and is controlled by the brain stem. However, within certain limits, we are also able to breathe voluntarily and consciously. When we do this, we gain direct access to the deeper and normally subconscious activities of the human being. This has been known in the East for thousands of years. Many astonishing physical feats demonstrated by yogis under strict medical scrutiny have been achieved through conscious breathing.

There are 3 main elements involved in the mechanics of breathing in and out. These involve:

1. The diaphragm
2. The ribs and associated joints
3. The sternum

Breathing has many extremely important roles in maintaining the body's vital functioning as well as the obvious role of obtaining oxygen for the body and eliminating carbon dioxide and other metabolites. This carbon dioxide is then used by all green plants for their health, which in turn, give us back oxygen.

The diaphragm is like a piston. It is situated very low in the body, with the heart passing directly above it and the lungs sitting on it to either side. The oesophagus passes through it to the stomach directly below, as does the main artery from the heart (the aorta) and the main vein (Vena Cava) to the heart. Directly beneath on the right is the liver, and to the left the spleen and pancreas. All the abdominal organs rest on another diaphragm (the perineum), which supports the base of the pelvis. When we breathe in, the dome-shaped thoracic diaphragm flattens out and compresses everything below it. This tends to distend the abdomen and the perineal diaphragm. When we breathe out, the diaphragm domes up into the thoracic cavity, allowing the abdominal viscera to move up also. As we breathe (12 times a minute) our viscera are being constantly massaged, helping to keep fluids moving, helping digestion and maintaining our organs.

Full diaphragmatic movement has far-reaching effects throughout the whole body and also impacts on how we think and feel. Yawning is the body's attempt to 'give the system a kick' to wake it up by giving the brain more oxygen to help it to stay awake. Sighing is the body's way of relieving physical stress caused by emotional tension.

Regular breathing exercises for just a few minutes each day can help you to become more emotionally, mentally and physically relaxed and alert. It will also improve conditions for natural healing in your body.

If you are committed to changing your breathing patterns, it is very important to establish how you actually breathe: from the top of your lungs or the middle? If you are not an abdominal breather, try the following routine and it will soon become the norm for your breathing.

1. Lie in a comfortable position on your back with a small cushion under your head.
2. Place both hands on your tummy.
3. The first part of breathing in should fill up the lower abdomen, so as you breathe in, feel your hands being pushed upwards. The second part of breathing in should fill the middle part of your chest. The third part of breathing in should fill the top area of your lungs.
4. Once you have mastered this, as you breathe in, push the fronts of both feet up towards your head, making sure your legs stay flat on the surface. As you breathe out, push your feet as far away as you can. This will improve the effect of any cranial osteopathy that has been performed. This process should be carried out for 15 breaths at least 3 times per day.
5. A progression from this exercise is known as 'Power Breathing'(1-4-2 breathing). As you breathe in, count to 1, then hold this in for the count of 4 before releasing to the count of 2.

IMPORTANT: IF YOU FEEL DIZZY, THEN RETURN TO STAGE 2 AND TRY POWER BREATHING AGAIN IN A WEEK.

As you get better at this exercise, try lengthening the breath in to the count of 2, hold for the count of 8 and breathe out to the count of 4. Once you have mastered this, try the ratio 4-16-8.

Regular exercise of this kind can improve the flow of lymphatic fluid around your body by as much as 15 times – just imagine what a great benefit that is to your immune system!