



Correct Breathing

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I believe that correct breathing and physical and mental relaxation are two master skills which can make a big difference in your quality of life. Make sure you read this section as well as the section on Physical and Mental Relaxation for the tips on learning "How to."

Signs of irregular breathing:

When you are not exerting and you still experience any of the following:

- Neck and shoulders moving while breathing
- Shallow breathing (chest breathing)
- Jerky breathing (like sobbing or sighing)
- Rapid breathing

- Uneven breathing
- Mouth breathing even when the nostrils are not blocked
- Too long a pause from one breath to the next
- Loud and noisy breathing unless there is a medical reason for that

Signs of regular and relaxed breathing:

The following tend to relax the body and the mind

- Neck and shoulders relaxed
- Belly breathing
- Slow breathing
- Smooth and rhythmical breathing
- Quiet breathing
- No long pauses between breaths
- Exhalation is equal or longer than inhalation.

Healthy Lung Breathing

When a person with healthy lungs, INHALES exactly as the nature designed it, he/she should experience the following:

Neck and shoulders remain relaxed. As the breath goes downward, the chest expands, the rib cage elevates, diaphragm goes down and the belly comes out. The area between sternum, navel and perineum stretches. The upper back widens and the lumbar arch slightly deepens.

When a person with healthy lungs, EXHALES exactly as the nature designed, he/she should experience the following:

Neck and shoulders remain relaxed. Diaphragm relaxes, chest and ribcage retract to their pre-inhalation size and position, the belly goes in, navel slightly pulled in towards the back and the lumbar arch in the low back slightly flattens.

Check and Improve Your Own Breathing

Use the "Hand Technique"

Sit in a quiet place and just settle down for a minute or two. Put your hand, horizontally, about one inch above your navel. Close your eyes. Breathe normally without trying to influence your breathing one way or the other. Observe how your belly moves every time you breathe in and breathe out. If you are breathing correctly, you should find that the hand over the tummy moves as you breathe in and out.

This is called ["abdominal" or "diaphragmatic breathing."](#) Abdominal breathing is good but don't deliberately puff your belly out, let the belly be relaxed. Also, if upper chest and/or shoulder and neck go up and down as you breathe in and out, let your neck and shoulder relax.

Belly Movement

Having checked yourself for the abdominal breathing, you may now check if your belly is moving in the right pattern.

Close your eyes again and track your hand on the belly.

Belly should bulge OUT when you breathe IN

Belly should pull IN when you breathe OUT.

Tips for Correcting Belly Movement

If the belly does not move correctly as for example, belly moves in when you inhale, you need to correct it. Here is how to:

Take a slow, deep breath in and breathe out slowly and steadily. The next breath will come in automatically, that is without your effort. Your tummy will move outward as you breathe in and move inward as you breathe out.

If your tummy again begins to move incorrectly or not move or only chest moves but not belly, relax and reestablish correct breathing. Take a deep, slow, easy breath and blow it out, slowly and steadily. Do it as many times as you need to. It will only make it better for you.

Form the Habit of Conscious Breathing

As you begin to pay steady attention to your breathing, it will be easier for you to monitor your breathing. Any time you find yourself holding your breath or having a jerky breath, breathing irregular or faster, go back to belly breathing

Pay attention to your breathing. While inhaling move your attention downward and follow the lungs filling, chest expanding horizontally and vertically and the belly bulging out. While exhaling, move your attention upward from abdomen to chest, notice the belly and solar plexus slightly contracting and the breath finally exiting through the nostrils.

Make it a habit to breathe consciously. Conscious breathing can be very beneficial. Develop positive and relaxed awareness of your breathing.

While driving, even when you use the cruise, you continue to monitor the road conditions all the time. Likewise, you should monitor your breathing. When you monitor the breath, you can decide when you want to leave your breathing on the "automatic pilot" and when to take charge and regulate your breath with awareness.