

Can You Pass the Breath Test?

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Place your right hand on your chest. Place your left hand on your abdomen. Take a deep breath. As you INHALE do you feel your chest rise or do you feel your abdomen rise? If you felt your chest rise, you are breathing backwards!

Most people do not breathe efficiently. When we are stressed we breathe from our chests. Our breath becomes rapid. Our bodies do not receive the oxygen they need to function properly and we can become tired or ill.

Proper breathing massages the organs, releases toxins, increases oxygen, improves circulation and relaxes the body. The inhale increases oxygen in the blood and is energizing. The exhale releases toxins and is relaxing.

When we become aware of our breathing, we can calm the mind and body by practicing a few simple breathing techniques. Breathing exercises are usually done sitting down cross-legged on the floor but can also be done while sitting in a chair or even lying down. Here are a few techniques that will help you to become aware of your breathing patterns, increase energy and help you to relax. In the following exercises, breathe in and out through your nose.

1. **Breathing for Relaxation**

Close your eyes and feel your breath pass through your nostrils, the back of your throat and into your lungs, diaphragm and abdomen (belly). Notice the length of the inhale and exhale. Control the length and quality of your breath by slowing it down. Breathe IN for 4 counts and breathe OUT for 4 counts. Gradually increase the length of the exhale by 1 count on each breath cycle. (ie. Inhale- 4 counts, Exhale -5 counts) until the exhale is twice as long as the inhale. Continue breathing in 4 counts and out for 8 counts until you feel relaxed. Remember to feel the breath in the three areas— lungs, diaphragm and abdomen. By increasing the length of the exhale, we consciously control our physiology and calm the mind and body.

2. **Breathing for Rejuvenation.**

Spinal Breathing- IMAGINE you are breathing IN from the top of your head, down through your spine to the tailbone. Breathe full, deep and slow. Then exhale UP from your tailbone to the top of your head. Imagine the breath cleansing the spine. Imagine the breath massaging the spine. Repeat- 5 times.

Chest Breathing- Inhale into your rib cage, Feel your ribs expand. Feel your chest expand in all directions as if it were a balloon. Exhale and feel your chest relax. Breathe out tightness in the chest. Repeat -5 times

Alternate Spinal Breathing with the Chest Breathing -5 times.

As you practice you will become more aware of your breath and comfortable with correct breathing.