

Exhale - Breathe

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

Diaphragmatic breathing is intended to help you use the 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

TIP: Place a 1kg bag of rice on your abdomen for the lying down practise.

Diaphragmatic Breathing Training

(With daily practice, most people can train themselves to diaphragmatically breathe in 6-8 weeks)

Exhale ⇒ **Pause** ⇒ **Breathe** (use these three words as you are BREATHE training)

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. Place your left hand on your upper chest and the right hand just below your rib cage. This will allow you to feel your diaphragm move as you breathe. (The hand on your chest should remain as still as possible)

2. **Exhale** through your nose; by gently contracting your abdominal muscles, letting them fall towards your spine as you exhale. **Pause** (1-2 seconds)

3. **Breathe** slowly through your nose so that your lower abdomen lifts your right hand.



An ideal BREATHE cycle is a 5 second **breath** and a 5 second **exhale** with a 1-2 second **pause**.

When you first learn the diaphragmatic breathing technique, it may be easier for you to follow the instructions lying down, as shown above. As you gain more practice, you can try the diaphragmatic breathing technique while sitting in a chair, as shown below. Eventually advance to a standing practice and then walking.

Exercise while sitting in a chair:

1. Sit comfortably, with your shoulders, head and neck relaxed.
2. Repeat #2 and #3 above



Note: You may notice an increased effort will be needed to use the diaphragm correctly. At first, you'll probably get tired while doing this exercise. However, with continued practice, diaphragmatic breathing will become easy and automatic.

How often should I practice this exercise?

At first, practice this exercise 5 minutes about 3-4 times per day. Gradually increase the amount of time you spend doing this exercise, and perhaps even add 'feedback', by placing a 1kg bag of rice on your abdomen.



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