

PRANAYAMA

BREATHING TECHNIQUES

What is pranayama & What are the benefits

Prana is the vital component that sustains life. “Pran” mean bio-energy and “ayama” means to control or regulation. There are various types of Pranayama, and their benefits in daily life are unlimited.

Most people go through life without even being aware of how many breaths they take in one minute. Breathing of such people is generally slow and erratic. Daily pranayama trains the lungs and improves the capacity of respiratory system immensely. Pranayama directly works on the nervous system. Daily Pranayama positively affects autonomic nervous system which controls and governs essential functions of the body like the heart rate, respiration and blood pressure.

Daily pranayama practice should be done on an empty stomach (at least 4 hours after any meal/ snack consumption)

*These practices are not for children under the age of 12 and for Cardiac patients.

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Benefits:

- Detoxifies and strengthens the lungs
- Releases toxins
- Relaxes the body and mind Brings clarity
- Relieves pain
- Strengthens the immune system
- Improves blood circulation Improves cell regeneration Elevates mood
- Reduces stress
- Improves posture
- Improves digestion
- Increases Cardiovascular capacity
- Reduces fat collected around the stomach.
- Sedative effect on the nervous system – relaxes the entire body
- Reduces tension and anxiety.
- It helps to reduce anger and frustrations.
- Daily Pranayama slows the ageing process. It makes your skin glow and releases toxins.
- Provides stillness of mind and provides lightness in your body.

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Most Breathing techniques are done by doing Belly breaths, which is expanding the lower belly while inhaling deeply and flattening it when exhaling as shown in Figure 1 below.

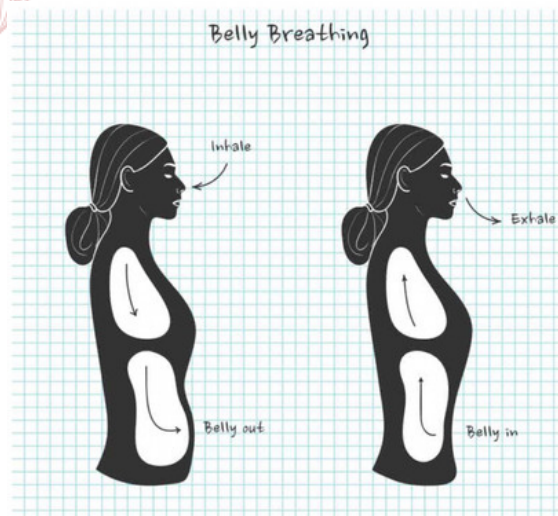


Figure 1

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1. *Kapalabhati or Skull Shining Breath*

Kapalabhati is a traditional internal cleansing technique (kriya), and can be used as a simple warm-up for formal pranayama

Kapala = skull

Bhati = light (implying perception, knowledge)

Kapalabhati consists of alternating short, explosive exhales and slightly longer, passive inhales.

Exhales are generated by powerful contractions of the lower belly (between the pubis and navel), which push air out of the lungs. Inhales are responses to the release of this contraction, which sucks air back into the lungs.

Step by Step

Step 1:

Focus on your lower belly. If needed, cup one hand lightly in the other and press them gently against your lower belly.

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BREATHING TECHNIQUES

1. *Kapalabhati or Skull Shining Breath*

Step 2

Now quickly contract (or pump your fisted hands against) your lower belly, pushing a burst of air out of your lungs. Then quickly release the contraction (or your hands), so the belly "rebounds" to suck air into your lungs. Pace yourself slowly at first. Repeat eight to 10 times at about one exhale-inhale cycle every second or two.

Step 3

As you become more adept at contracting/releasing your lower belly, you can increase your pace to about two exhale-inhale cycles every second. Imagine the exhale sweeping out or "brightening" the inner lining of your skull.

Step 4

Do 25 to 30 cycles at first. Gradually increase the number of cycles you do each practice to 100 or more. Breathing in and out is done through the nose.

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2. Bastrika

This Pranayama is good to release Anxiety and all that stagnant energy stuck in the body. So when your mind is running fast you can do Bastrika Pranayama for 5 minutes to calm the mind and stay present in the moment.

Step 1: Inhale through the nose for 4 seconds
Step

Step 2: Hold your breath for 7 seconds

Step 3: Exhale from your nose for 8 seconds

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3. Deep breath (Inhaling from the nose and Exhaling from the mouth)

Step 1: Inhale deeply through the nose

Step 2: Exhale deeply through the mouth

Step 3: Repeat for 5minutes

**Step 4: Increase the rate of breathing-
breathing faster and deeper**



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4. Nadi Shodhana- Channel-Cleaning Breath

Nadi = channel

Shodhana = cleaning, purifying

Step 1:

Sit in a comfortable position and place your left palm on your lap.

Step 2:

Gently close your right nostril with your right thumb. Exhale through your left nostril. Once you have exhaled fully, inhale deeply and slowly with the left nostril, then close it with your ring-little fingers. Open and exhale slowly through the right nostril.

Step 3:

Keep the right nostril open, inhale, then close it, and open and exhale slowly through the left. This is one cycle. Repeat 3 to 5 times, then release and go back to normal breathing.

Benefits:

Lowers heart rate and reduces stress and anxiety

Synchronises the two hemispheres of the brain.

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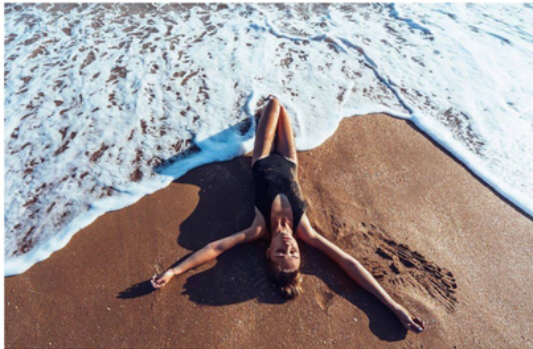
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