

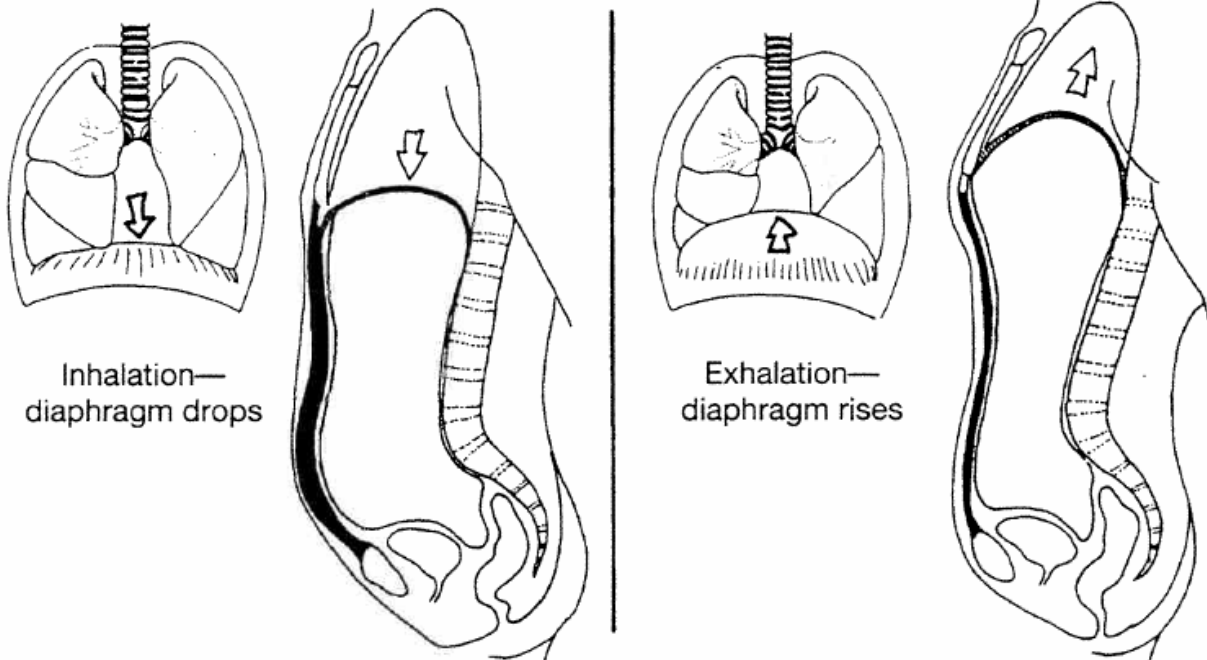


Deep Breathing for Relaxation

OVERVIEW*

Deep breathing helps ensure that there is a sufficient amount of oxygen in your body. Oxygen is a nutrient carried in the blood, and it is necessary for metabolism in healthy tissues. Internal organs and muscles as well as injured areas need a sufficient daily amount of oxygen to survive and a great deal more to heal.

Some people use deep breathing as their only relaxation exercise. Some use it as a cue to signal the start of their tension-relieving regimen. However you choose to use it, it is quick, pleasant, and readily available.



Inhalation—
diaphragm drops

Exhalation—
diaphragm rises

DEEP NATURAL BREATHING**

Deep natural breathing is portable and can be done without calling any attention to yourself. Deep breathing can be done whenever you feel the need to control current stressors. It allows you the opportunity to relax and gather thoughts.

Practice this technique for 3 to 4 minutes: Sit comfortably with feet uncrossed. Place one hand on the chest and the other on the abdomen. Inhale deeply through the nose, allowing your abdomen to expand, and move your lower hand outward. When the abdomen is extended, then

continues

continued

allow your chest to expand and move the upper hand. Hold the air in for a couple of seconds. As you begin to exhale slowly, concentrate on creating a whooshing sound through pursed lips. Repeat several times in a slow, deliberate manner.

BREATHING EXERCISES***

Each of the following exercises may be repeated slowly for several minutes as an introduction to deeper breathing for relaxation:

- simply attending to the breath, counting one on each exhalation
- counting the breaths sequentially up to four and starting over
- imagining the body as hollow and allowing each breath to fill the hollow body slowly with relaxation
- in the mind's eye, seeing the breath as a soft relaxing color and breathing that color into all parts of the body
- breathing the relaxation up one side of the body and down the other; breathing the relaxation up the front of the body and down the back; breathing the relaxation up through the soles of the feet and relaxing the inside of the body; breathing the relaxation down from the top of the head, over the skin, and back into the feet

Notes:

*Source: Ellen Mohr Catalano, *The Chronic Pain Workbook*, New Harbinger Publications, Inc., © 1987.

Source: American Institute for Preventive Medicine, © 1986, *Back at Work, (\$7.95), 30445 Northwestern Highway, Ste. 350, Farmingham Hills, Michigan 48334. Phone: (313) 539-1800.

***Source: Barbara Montgomery Dossey, Lynn Keegan, Cathie E. Guzzetta, and Leslie Gooding Kolkmeier, *Holistic Nursing: A Handbook for Practice*, Aspen Publishers, Inc., © 1988.
