



Breathe right

If you want an all-over health boost with very little effort, all you have to do is breathe . . . deeply!

Sometimes the smallest things come with the biggest benefits. Breathing deeply is one of them.

It's a simple formula for improved health: breathe correctly and consciously for a few short minutes a day and you'll feel the effects for a full 24 hours. Breathing properly is a central part of staying healthy!

So isn't it time you turned your breathing into a health boost?

Step 1: Take a moment

Rather make good breathing part of your daily routine by automatically doing spot checks at certain times of the day. Choose daily moments to focus on breathing correctly – perhaps while you're waiting at the traffic lights, just after waking up in the morning or during your tea break at work.

Step 2: Breathe like a pro

After checking in with your body and mind, try these better-breathing tips:

1. First, lie down on your back or sit up straight in your chair.
2. Imagine you're growing taller or that you're being pulled up by your ears towards the sky – this will make you drop your shoulders and straighten your back.
3. Place your hands with fingertips touching just below your rib cage over your belly button.
4. Inhale deeply through your nose without moving your shoulders (shallow chest breathing generally causes shoulders to bunch up). The aim is to expand your rib cage and drop your diaphragm – your fingertips should move apart if you're breathing deep enough as your belly pushes outward.
5. Exhale through your mouth. Keeping your lips pursed on exhalation to control the exhale.
6. Continue breathing in and out deeply and slowly for five minutes – avoid shallow or rapid breaths.

Benefits of deep breathing

- **The feel-good factor.** Breathing deeply relieves muscle tension, anxiety and general stress. In fact, a better flow of oxygen can either calm you down or increase your level of stimulation (that's why we yawn).
- **A postural pick-me-up.** Most people straighten their backs when they take a deep breath.
- **Weight off your chest.** Learning to breathe correctly can relieve chest pains and anxiety.
- **Extra efficiency.** Deep breathing delivers more oxygen to your organs, allowing them to function more efficiently. A 2006 study published in the Journal of Lymphodaema also revealed that deeper breathing has a positive effect on lymphatic drainage.
- **Better digestion:** It also indirectly benefits conditions such as ulcers, gastritis, reflux disorder and irritable bowel syndrome, which are all exacerbated by sky-high stress levels.

