

Diaphragmatic or Belly Breathing

Sometimes, after a surgery or for those of us who hold our bellies in while breathing we teach ourselves incorrectly how to breathe. The following exercise will help us relearn the correct way to breathe and can be done in any position, but only laying and seated positions will be reviewed here. Practice this 2-4 times a day and at bedtime.

In the laying on the back position, place a hand on you stomach below your belly button and the other hand on your chest. Take a slow, deliberate deep breath and feel your chest and your belly rise together and after a slight pause allow them to fall together. Spend a couple of minutes breathing in this manner (20-30 breaths). Now, practice belly breathing. Taking a deep breath and focusing it all through your tummy, with relatively little chest movement is the practice of belly breathing. Do this for a couple of minutes in a relaxed manner until it feels quite natural. Belly breathing should be your natural way of breathing when lying flat on your back.

In the seated position with a firm flat seat, stick your belly out and arch your back while taking a slow deep breath. Then, allow yourself to slouch as you exhale in a relaxed manner. This exercise reinforces belly breathing in a more upright position. If you are having a hard time mastering it take a belt and fix it around your chest to reinforce the use of your abdomen and not your chest to breath.

Pelvic Tilt



Lay comfortably on the floor with your knees & hips flexed (figure A). As you exhale, tuck your tail under you so that your abdomen tightens, but not your butt muscles (figure B). Hold this position for 5 seconds & then slowly allow your abdomen to relax. Perform this contraction 5-7 times and repeat it 2-3 times each day.

Side-lying Stretch



Start laying on one side, with your head supported by your hand & the other arm reaching behind you to hold on and counterbalance your leg, which is going to hang off the table, couch or bed. Your other leg is bent slightly at most upon the surface which you are laying:

1. Allow the weight of your top leg to twist your spine fully.
2. Lift the leg that is hanging slightly toward the ceiling while inhaling. (Figure A)
3. Exhale completely and allow the leg to drop again. When this muscle is fully stretched you should be able to touch the floor with your toe. (Figure B)

Perform this stretch 1-2 times a day and repeat it 3-5

Strengthening Your Stomach with Sit-backs



**Level 1** (figures 1a & 1b)

- Start with your knees bent & your arms straight out in front of you. Keep your back & neck straight (figure 1a).
- Sit back as far as possible without allowing your heels off the ground & maintaining a straight back (figure 1b). Hold this position for 2 deep breaths and then return to the start position. Repeat this exercise 5-7 times. Upon mastering it, you may move on to the next level.

**Level 2** (figures 2a & 2b)

- This is the same exercise as level 1, but this time fold your arms across your chest. Upon mastering this level, you may move on to level 3.

**Level 3** (figure 3a & 3b)

- This is same exercise as level 1, but this time place your clasped hands behind your neck. Upon mastering this level, you may move on to the next level.

**Level 4** (figure 4a & 4b)

- This time keep your hands the same as in Level 3, but as you sit-back twist your spine so that your opposite elbow is over your knee. Do this in an alternating fashion for 5-7 times on each side.