



Benefits of Deep Breathing



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Breathe in. Breathe out. We do this all day, every day without a thought. Ask yourself this- when was the last time you took a deep breath? Probably not as frequently as you think. I would venture to say only a few times a day. But did you know that deep breathing is one of our easiest, most convenient and natural tools to combat issues like stress and anxiety, reduce pain, high blood pressure and even aide in digestion?

So why should you do this? Simply put- extra oxygen does wonders for the body and mind. It cleanses, opens and soothes different parts of our being and is overall something extremely healthy we can all do. Here are a few benefits to deep breathing:

- 1) **Decreases stress, increases calm.** When you become stressed or anxious, your brain releases cortisol, the "stress hormone." By taking deep breaths, your heart rate slows, more oxygen enters our blood stream and ultimately communicates with the brain to relax. Deep breathing also ups your endorphins, the "feel good" chemical.
- 2) **Relieves pain.** As stated above, deep breathing triggers the release of endorphins, which not only helps create a feeling ing, but also combats pain.
- 3) **Stimulates the lymphatic system (Detoxifies the body).** Breathing releases carbon monoxide, which is important to fully release. Actually, breathing is in charge of 70% of cleansing the body of toxins (the other 30% is through bladder and bowels.) If you do not breathe fully, your body must work overtime to release these toxins.
- 4) **Improves immunity.** When your blood is fully oxygenated, it carries and absorbs nutrients and vitamins more efficiently. Essentially, the cleaner the blood, the harder it is for illnesses to stay put in your system.
- 5) **Increases energy.** The more oxygen that is in the blood, the better our body functions. It also improves our stamina.

6) **Lowers blood pressure.** As your muscles relax, this allows your blood vessels to dialate, which improves circulation and lowers blood pressure. Deep breathing also slows and regulates the heart rate, which also helps with lowering your BP.

7) **Improves digestion.** The more you breathe deep, the more healthier blood flow you will produce, which in turn promotes your organs to function more effectively, including your intestines.

8) **Helps support correct posture.** Next time you breathe in, notice that you simultaneously lengthen and straighten your spine. In order to take a deep breath in, your lungs take up maximum space, your diaphragm pulls down, so in turn your torso straightens in order for this to be possible.

Now, deep breathing is something that is unnatural for your body to do, so just like learning any new skill, it takes practice! Try to incorporate one breathing exercise each day. Here is a simple breathing exercise that can be incorporated into your daily routine:

>>> Breathe in calmly, through the nose, filling your abdomen and chest, for 5 seconds (or longer, not exceeding 7 seconds). Hold this breath in for 3 seconds. Slowly and gently release the breath through the mouth for 5 seconds (or more, whatever is comfortable.) breathe out through a slightly parted lip or "O" shaped lips. Repeat this 5 times, or even better, continue for 5 minutes.<<<

Important tips: Deep breathing should be slow and gentle. Remember to fill the abdomen, not just the chest. A simple way to make sure you are doing this is to place one hand on your stomach and one on your chest. Breath deeply and make sure your hand on your stomach is rising. Try to be aware of your breath, heartbeat and to release tension from your body. Sometimes it's easier to lie down or sit comfortably in a chair.

Can't find time for these techniques? Consider ways to sneak them into your schedule, like right when you wake up and go to sleep, driving home from work, in the shower, or even put a reminder on your phone or a post-it note on your bathroom mirror or computer monitor at work.

So what are you waiting for? Take a deep breath in... And out!

References

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