



Exercise:

DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING

ABOUT THIS EXERCISE

This exercise is designed to help you relax during a stressful situation by helping you control your breathing. When a person is stressed they take shorter breaths which decreases the amount of oxygen entering the bloodstream. Taking deeper breaths helps increase oxygen and decreases stress.

This exercise is used throughout this guide as the first step before carrying out other exercises.

Diaphragmatic breathing involves taking slow deep breaths from the stomach. It can be done while standing, sitting, laying down, or while walking. This type of breathing is an effective way of managing stress, anxiety, acute stress, panic attacks, and insomnia.

HOW TO DO THE EXERCISE

Prepare your body for the exercise:

1. Sit or lay down in a comfortable position.
2. Close your eyes and place one hand on your chest and another on your stomach. Notice how you're breathing. Is your stomach rising when you inhale and going down when you exhale, or just your chest?
3. Observe your body. Is it tense? Does any part of your body hurt? How hot or cold are your hands and feet?

Slowly repeat the following breathing cycles:

1. Breathe through your nose, stomach first, in a four-second count.
2. Hold your breath for four seconds.
3. Exhale through your nose, stomach first, in a four-second count.
4. Hold your breath for four seconds.
5. Repeat this exercise three times.

After completing this exercise for the first time, observe your body. Do you notice any changes? Do you feel more relaxed? Do your neck and shoulders feel less painful or has the pain disappeared? Are your hands and feet warmer?

Throughout this guide, you'll find several versions of this technique with different breathing counts. The exercise above is shown with a four-second count which includes four counts for breathing, four counts for holding your breath, four counts for exhaling, and four counts for holding your breath (4-4-4-4).

Other exercises will require holding your breath at the end or breathing in shorter counts. In the end, what matters is that you do these exercises at your own pace and according to your lung capacity. Don't overexert yourself; otherwise, you'll wind up feeling more stressed.

FURTHER SUPPORT

- Watch this [video](#) to learn more about diaphragmatic breathing.