

Abdominal Breathing Exercises

Exercises to help you relax and relieve stress

What is abdominal breathing?

Abdominal breathing is a way to breathe from your stomach area (abdomen) to fill your entire lungs with air. Your lungs are like balloons that should fill up and empty all the way.

Your body gets the most benefit when you use your entire lungs. Many people who are under stress breathe in short and shallow breaths from the chest. This is not the best way to breathe because it only uses the upper parts of the lung. Breathing from your chest can increase muscle tension.

What are the benefits of abdominal breathing?

Abdominal breathing relaxes your muscles and lets more oxygen in to energize your body. You can practice abdominal breathing when you are tense, anxious, low on energy or need to calm your mind. A few deep breaths from your stomach area can make a difference. It is important that you breathe from your abdomen when you are under stress. This will help reduce tension and anxiety.

How do I breathe from my abdomen?

Lie down and put your hands on your stomach area. Breathe from your abdomen so that your hands go up when you breathe in and down when you breathe out. Focus on making your stomach go up and down at a regular rate. Make it smooth and easy. You can practice this anywhere.

Other breathing exercises:

- *Watch your breath.* This is called mindfulness. Sit or lie in a comfortable position with your eyes closed. Focus your attention on your breathing, and do not try to change it. Watch it go in and out. If it changes, keep being aware of it, almost like you are watching someone else. This is a way to relax and balance your body and mind. This method can also work to decrease pain.
- *Focus on breathing out.* Keep watching your breath, and do not try to change it. Think only of breathing out. When you push more air out, you will automatically take more air in. Breathe deeply and feel yourself relax.

TO LEARN MORE

- Adolescent Medicine (206) 987-2028
- Adolescent Medicine Nursing Line (206) 987-3005
- Your Child's Health-Care Provider

Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Please call Marketing Communications at (206) 987-5205.

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Children's Hospital. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's health-care provider.