



Breathe Healthy

CHALLENGE

Practice breathing to improve your health

Requirements to complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Read "Breathe Healthy."
2. Practice breathing daily to improve your health.
3. Keep a record of your completed health challenge in case your organization requires documentation.



What's it feel like when you're stressed out?

You know...you're late for work and stuck in rush-hour traffic. Maybe your kid is having a meltdown in the middle of the grocery store. Or you've got a looming work deadline and a million other priorities. Ugh!

Your heart rate rises. Maybe you break a sweat. Your stomach turns in knots. Or your frustration meter starts to rise. Sound familiar?

Or maybe your stress is tied to something bigger like moving, a job change, car trouble, relationship matters, health problems, or money.

Chances are pretty good you know what stress feels like.

Take the Breathe-Right Quiz

How much do you know about the health benefits of breathing?



- | | T | F | |
|----|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| 1. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Closing your eyes is required to benefit from mindful breathing. |
| 2. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Endorphins released during mindful breathing can help reduce pain. |
| 3. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | It takes 60 minutes of quiet breathing to reduce stress and improve mood. |
| 4. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Deep breathing can help lower heart rate and blood pressure. |
| 5. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Research shows a regular breathing practice can help treat anxiety and depression. |

How did you do? If you answered any of these statements incorrectly, you could benefit from learning more about mindful breathing to improve your health. It only takes about 10 minutes of quiet breathing to reduce stress and improve your mood. And you don't have to close your eyes. (If you can't take a 10-minute break, start with 2 or 3 minutes.)

Answers: 1. False. 2. True. 3. True. 4. True. 5. True.

Maybe it's in the form of headaches, neck and shoulder pain, fatigue, or even an overwhelming sense of gloom or uneasiness. Maybe you're irritable or in a bad mood. Or maybe you make it through the day, but then can't get to sleep at night.

Been there, done that? Stress can take a heavy toll on your health and happiness.

Too often, people try to beat stress in unhealthy ways to feel better. For example...shop therapy, gambling, drinking, eating too much, or maybe binge-watching shows instead of doing something better.

But it doesn't have to be that way. There's an easy way to beat stress, improve your mood, calm your mind, and protect your health. It's free. It only takes a few minutes. And you can do it anytime...anywhere.

Take a deep breath, cause it's literally that easy. Take the month-long health challenge to Breathe Healthy

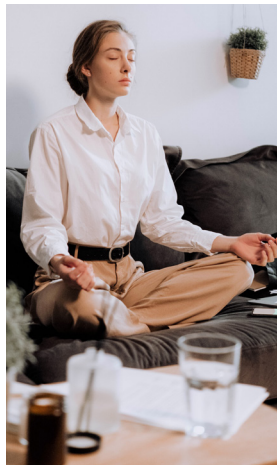
Relax:
Breathing tips to beat stress
<https://tinyurl.com/yaxcdkzu>

Do You Take Time to Breathe?

Most people don't, says Stanford University researcher Dr. Emma Seppälä. She's the author of the book, *The Happiness Track*, a frequent TED Talks speaker, and director of Stanford's Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education. And she helps people learn to use breathing to reduce stress, improve health, and increase happiness.

TIP: When you're stressed out, and you've got a million things to do at home or at work, it's easy to think you don't have time for mindful breathing. But before you rush off to the next thing on your to-do list, give it a try.

"Breathing is the single most important act that we do every day," says Seppälä. "Daily breathing practices activate the parasympathetic nervous system, which is associated with resting and digesting, and a more peaceful mind and body."



7 Steps to Healthy Breathing

Want to learn how to breathe to improve your health? Here's one easy-to-follow breathing practice you can use. Follow these seven steps:

- 1 Create a breathing practice.** Set aside 10 to 15 minutes each day to breathe. Schedule it just like you would an important meeting.
- 2 Find a quiet place** where you won't be disturbed. Close your office or bedroom door. Go to your car. Sit on a bench in a quiet area of a park.
- 3 Set a timer.** Start with 10 minutes. As you get comfortable with breathing, increase the time to 15 or 20 minutes.
- 4 Sit comfortably,** and place one hand on your stomach.
- 5 Breathe in through your nose.** Inhale deeply and slowly. Pay attention to your chest rising as your lungs fill with air. Focus on your breathing, and try not to think about anything else.
- 6 Exhale through your mouth.** Tighten your stomach muscles, and try to push out as much air as possible.
- 7 Repeat the process** until time's up.

This is just one example of a breathing exercise you can use to reduce stress and feel better. But it's not the only way to use breathing to improve your health.

It's a way to help you get started, create a daily breathing practice, and be more mindful about your health, happiness, and lifestyle choices.

Want to be healthier and happier? Stop what you're doing, and take a few minutes to breathe.

Infographic:
The Scientific
Benefits of
Breathing
<https://tinyurl.com/y9aiklv>

11 Health Benefits From Taking a Break to Breathe



If you think taking a time out to breathe sounds a little woo-woo, you're not alone. When you're stressed out, rushing from thing to thing, maybe sleep deprived, too, it's easy to dismiss.

Maybe you're even thinking: "Who's got time for that? I'm breathing just fine."

But why not give it a try? Take a few minutes to breathe, and you might be surprised by how you feel. Research shows breathing can help:

1. Lower cortisol levels linked to stress, inflammation and chronic disease¹
2. Control blood pressure²
3. Reduce cravings
4. Increase productivity
5. Treat depression and anxiety³
6. Improve mood
7. Increase energy and happiness
8. Control impulsive behavior
9. Improve quality of sleep⁴
10. Strengthen the immune system⁵
11. Improve brain function, thinking and problem solving⁶

Video: Calm during COVID: Mindful Breathing
<https://tinyurl.com/euxkd925>

References

1. Xiao, M., et al. (2017). The effects of diaphragmatic breathing on attention, negative affect and stress in healthy adults. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8:874. From: <https://tinyurl.com/g9kdrv4>
2. Craighead, D., et al. (2021). Time-efficient inspiratory muscle strength training lowers blood pressure and improves endothelial function, NO bioavailability, and oxidative stress in midlife/older adults with above-normal blood pressure. *Journal of the American Heart Association*, 10(13): e020980. From: <https://tinyurl.com/ateijeh3>
3. Sharma, A., et al. (2016). A breathing-based meditation intervention for patients with major depressive disorder following inadequate response to antidepressants: A randomized pilot study. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 78(1):59-63. From: <https://tinyurl.com/yc4737kg>
4. National Institutes of Health. (2017). Insomnia: Relaxation technique and sleeping habits. Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care. From: <https://tinyurl.com/ycpsdm70>
5. Kim, D., et al. (2021). Large pH oscillations promote host defense against human airways infection. *Journal of Experimental Medicine*, 218(4): e20201831. From: <https://tinyurl.com/2wvccxnw>
6. Herrero, J, et al. (2018). Breathing above the brain stem: Volitional control and attentional modulation in humans. *Journal of Neurophysiology*, 119(1): jn.00551.2017. From: <https://tinyurl.com/ntbh9ctx>



Breathe Healthy

CHALLENGE
Practice breathing to improve your health

Instructions

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, or add to your digital calendar).
2. Aim to practice breathing to improve your health daily. Find a time that works best for you.
3. Use the calendar to record your actions and choices to practice breathing to improve your health.
4. Review your progress at the end of each day, week, and at the end of the month. Then keep up the practice for a lifetime of best health.

MONTH:							HC = Health Challenge™ ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Weight & weekly summary
HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	
HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	
HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	
HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	
HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	

_____ Number of days this month I practiced breathing to improve my health

_____ Number of days this month I exercised at least 30 minutes

Other wellness projects completed this month:

Name _____ Date _____