

Diaphragmatic Breathing



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
WEXNER MEDICAL CENTER

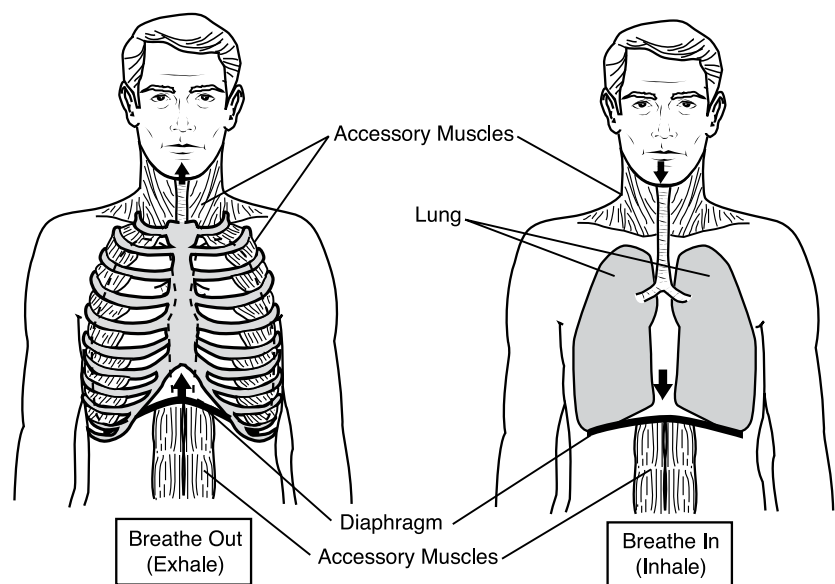
Diaphragmatic breathing helps you to breathe more easily and uses less energy. People with lung disease often have enlarged lungs because air gets trapped in the lungs. Diaphragmatic breathing helps get the stale, trapped air out of your lungs.

Muscles involved in breathing

The diaphragm is a large curved muscle separating your lungs from your abdomen. It does about 80% of the work of breathing.

Normally, when your diaphragm lowers, your lungs expand and your abdomen pushes out. When your diaphragm rises, your abdomen moves in, and your lungs relax and empty.

Lung disease often causes the diaphragm to flatten and become weak. This causes you to use **accessory muscles** to breathe. These muscles are found in the upper chest, neck and along the ribs. Using these muscles is less effective than using your diaphragm because it takes more energy and this requires more oxygen.



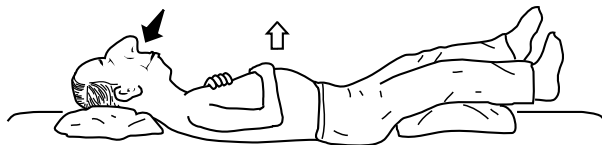
Practicing diaphragmatic breathing

Diaphragmatic breathing will help your diaphragm and abdominal muscles get stronger. Using this breathing, along with pursed lip breathing, will help get more stale air out of your lungs.

Steps

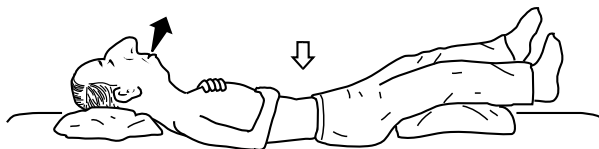
1. Get comfortable and relax your neck and shoulder muscles. You can lie down, sit or stand to practice this type of breathing.
2. Place one hand on your upper chest and place the other hand at the bottom of your ribs, just above your waistline. Use your hands to feel the movements as you breathe.

3. **Take a breath in through your nose and feel your hand on your stomach move outward.** Do not let your shoulders move up. You should not feel movement of your hand on your chest. Think of expanding your lungs down toward your toes.



4. Breathe S-L-O-W-L-Y and gently through your mouth with pursed lips, as if you were going to whistle or blow out a candle. The hand on your stomach moves in as you breathe out. You may need to pull in your stomach muscles at first to help move your diaphragm up.

5. Exhale or breathe out at least twice as long as you inhale or breathe in.



When to use diaphragmatic breathing

Learning diaphragmatic breathing takes patience and practice. As you become more comfortable breathing with this technique, you will notice that you will be using it all the time. It is the natural way to breathe.

- Practice diaphragmatic breathing for at least 10 to 15 minutes each day. Rest as needed between breaths.
- Whenever you get anxious, upset or short of breath, use this breathing technique.
- Use it with activities, such as walking, climbing stairs or carrying objects.

Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

For more health information, contact the Library for Health Information at **614-293-3707** or e-mail **health-info@osu.edu**.