

Breathing Exercises

Symptoms of Hyperventilation

Chest pain	Faster or deeper breathing	Tingling fingers	Cold hands or feet
Feeling tense	Short of breath	Unable to breathe deeply	Palpitations
Dizzy spells	Tight feelings in chest	Stiff fingers or arms	Feelings of anxiety
Feeling confused	Bloated feeling in stomach	Tight feelings around mouth	

Hyperventilation can usually be corrected by breathing retraining. Lum(1984) reported a study in which more than 1000 anxious and phobic patients were treated using breathing retraining, physical therapy and relaxation. Symptoms were usually abolished in 1 to 6 months with some younger patients requiring only a few weeks. At 12 months, 75% were free of all symptoms.

Here are some exercises to try. Make sure that the shoulders are not used to breathe! Keep the arms and shoulders still. Sitting in a chair with arms will help this habit a great deal. If the upper body and diaphragm tightness is still quite apparent, consider coming in for some physiotherapy.

Pursed lip breathing

Pursed lip breathing, combined with diaphragmatic breathing, improves lung efficiency! This is used for people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or who have an asthma diagnosis.

1. You may be seated or lying down.
2. Put your dominant hand on your abdomen and your other hand on the chest.
3. Breathe in through the nose, ensuring that your abdomen is moving up against the hand with the inhalation.
4. Exhale out slowly through pursed lips (like you are blowing out of a straw).

Anti-arousal breathing

Feelings of anxiety or pain should reduce with this exercise.

1. Sit or recline comfortably and exhale slowly and fully through pursed lips (like blowing out of a straw).
2. Imagine blowing a thin stream of air at a candle flame placed 6 inches from your mouth, so that the candle flickers but does not go out.
3. When you have exhaled fully, without straining, pause for a count of "one" and then inhale through the nose. Full exhalation creates a "coiled spring", making inhalation easier.
4. Repeat the inhalation and exhalation for not less than 30 cycles.

After some weeks of daily practice you should achieve an inhalation phase that lasts about 2-3 seconds with an exhalation of 6-7 seconds, without strain.

Practice twice daily, and repeat the exercise for a few minutes (6 cycles takes about a minute) every hour when anxious or when stress increases.

Practice on waking and before bedtime and if at all possible before meals.

Abnormalities in breathing can also be caused by changes in the metabolism. If these exercises do not seem to help, consider having metabolic typing performed in office.