

# Use deep breathing to relax



## What is deep breathing?

Every day you breathe between 17,000 and 23,000 times. Most of the time you are not aware of your breathing. When you breathe without being aware, your breaths are shallow and in your chest. When you are stressed, your breaths are shallow and fast.

Deep breathing:

- Uses muscles in your abdomen to pull air deep into your lungs.
- Improves relaxation, oxygen intake, heart rate, blood pressure, and pain.
- Can help anxiety and stress.

## How can I practice deep breathing?

- Begin by sitting up or laying down in a comfortable position. If you are seated, sit up making your spine long. This will allow your lungs to expand fully.
- Place one hand on your chest and the other on your belly.
- Take a slow deep breath in through your nose. Fill up your chest first. Feel your chest move out against your hand. Then slowly fill up your belly. Feel your belly move against your hand.
- Breathe out through your nose. Slowly let the air out of your belly first. Then slowly let the air out of your chest. Feel both hands lower.
- Focus on the rise of your chest and belly each time you breathe in and the fall of your belly and chest each time you breathe out.
- Notice the sensation of air moving in and out of your nostrils. Bring your awareness to the gentle sound of your breath as you breathe in and out.
- Continue to do this breathing for 5 or 10 minutes or as long as you feel comfortable.

Try to  
practice for  
5 or 10  
minutes at  
a time.

## Tips to help

### Count your breaths

- Focus on counting the number of times you breathe in out.
- Breathe in through your nose. Count 1, 2, 3. Pause.
- Breathe out through your nose. Count 1, 2, 3. Pause.
- Practice increasing the time you breathe out.  
Breathe in; count 1, 2, 3. Breathe out; count 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

### Breathe deeply using a mantra

Use a word or phrase with your deep breaths. These words or phrases are called “mantras.” For example, you can say “I am” as you breathe in, and “at peace” when you breathe out.

### Alternate nostril breathing

Alternate nostril breathing or switching nostrils can help you focus and lower anxiety.

- Bring your right hand up palm facing your head. Use your thumb to block your **right** nostril. **Breathe in** through your **left** nostril.
- Move your thumb away from your **right** nostril. Use your ring finger to block your **left** nostril. **Breathe out** through your **right** nostril.
- Keep your **left** nostril blocked. **Breathe in** through the **right** nostril.
- Block your **right** nostril. **Breathe out** through the **left**.
- Do 10-12 breaths, alternating each nostril.

This is 1 full breath.

This is 1 full breath.

