



Abdominal Breathing

Abdominal breathing may help:

- Lower your heart rate and blood pressure.
- Relax muscle tension.
- Increase your blood oxygen level.
- Improve concentration.
- Boost your immune system.
- Reduce stress hormone.

Abdominal breathing is also called diaphragmatic breathing. The diaphragm is the muscle that sits under the lungs. When you breathe air in, the diaphragm contracts and pulls the bottom of the lungs downward, allowing your lungs to fill with air. When you breathe out, the diaphragm returns to a domed shape, pushing air out of the lungs (Figure 1).

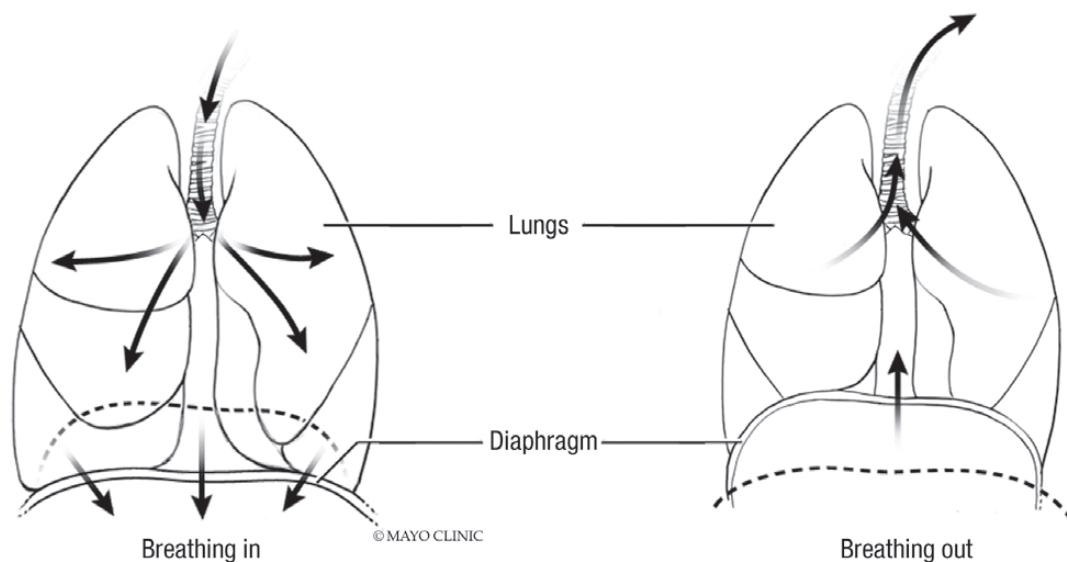


Figure 1.

Abdominal breathing steps

1. Loosen tight clothing around your belly (abdomen) and waist and sit comfortably with your feet flat on the floor. You may place your hands in your lap or at your side.
2. Place one hand on your chest and another across your abdomen while you breathe. This helps you become aware of your breathing.
3. Breathe in (inhale) slowly through your nose. Notice your abdomen expand as you breathe in (Figure 2).
4. Breathe out (exhale) through pursed lips. This helps you take a longer breath out. (Figure 2).

Make a goal to practice this breathing three times a day for 8 to 10 times each time. After regular practice, this breathing becomes more familiar and you can use it as a daily practice or as needed.



Figure 2. Relaxed breathing

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BARBARA WOODWARD LIPS PATIENT EDUCATION CENTER

Mrs. Lips, a resident of San Antonio, Texas, was a loyal Mayo Clinic patient of more than 40 years and a self-made business leader who significantly expanded her family's activities in oil, gas and ranching. Upon her death in 1995, Mrs. Lips paid the ultimate compliment by leaving her entire estate to Mayo Clinic. By naming the Barbara Woodward Lips Patient Education Center, Mayo honors her generosity, her love of learning, her belief in patient empowerment and her dedication to high-quality care.

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