

Learning to Breathe Naturally

1. The first step in relaxing your breathing is to form the habit of breathing in and out through the nose.
When you breathe through your nose, the pace of breathing slows naturally and the breath deepens. Nasal breathing also adjusts the temperature of the air, calms the nervous system, and filters impurities from the incoming air.
Breathe through the nose at all times except during periods of exertion, such as when exercising.
2. Next, lie on your stomach in the crocodile posture.
Learn to be aware of the two directions of the breath. The exhalation is cleansing and relaxing. The inhalation is nourishing and energizing.
Let each breath flow into the next without pause.
You don't need to make changes in your breathing yet, rather observe these two movements of breath, over and over. This is an important aspect of breath training that many people never learn.
3. Now learn to recognize the sensations of diaphragmatic breathing.
When you inhale, the back rises, then lowers, the floating ribs expand, and the abdomen presses against the floor.
When you exhale, all of these areas release.
Notice that there is little movement in the chest.
4. To deepen the breath, try this experiment.
For five breaths or so, each time you exhale slowly press the navel inward, exhaling a little more than usual.
After each of these exhalations, allow the inhalation to flow in deeply, expanding your lower back.
After five breaths, go back to normal exhalations but continue to let the inhalation be deep and smooth without blocking it.
Your breath will feel deep and relaxed.
5. Now roll onto your back and lie in the corpse pose. Notice that in this position there is less movement in the chest, and the abdomen rises and falls noticeably with each breath.
As you continue to relax, the breath will slow down, even though it remains deep.
Continue to rest here, simply focus on the breath, and let it find its own natural pace.
6. At the end of the inhalation, when your body is expanded, instead of using effort to inhale, simply relax and let the exhalation begin on its own.
At the end of the exhalation, when your body is contracted, simply relax and let the inhalation begin. Let each breath flow into the next breath by relaxing.
Your breath will be flowing through the nose. It will be deep, smooth, even and without pause, and you will feel very deeply relaxed.

Poses to Facilitate Diaphragmatic Breathing

Crocodile Pose (Makarasana)

- Rest on the abdomen
- Fold and stack the arms in front
- Center and rest the head on the forearms
- Part the legs to relax the hips
- Turn the feet and toes out for comfort (they may also be more comfortable turned in)



Props for assisting the pose:

Place a rolled blanket under the upper chest to alleviate shoulder, upper back, and neck discomfort.

Corpse Pose (Shavasana)

- Rest on the back
- Center the head and relax the neck
- Part the arms slightly away from the body
- Part the legs 12 to 18 inches

Props for assisting the pose:

Place a folded blanket under the head to keep the head in alignment with the spine.
Place a rolled blanket under the knees to lengthen the lower back.



Seated Posture (Sukhasana)

- Sit with the pelvis upright on folded blankets, or on a chair
- Sit upright and lengthen the spine
- Relax shoulders by rolling them back and down
- Relax elbows alongside the body
- Place hands on the legs where they fall naturally

Props for assisting the pose:

Sit on a stack of 2-3 or more folded blankets to elevate the hips slightly higher than the knees.
Support the knees as needed.

