



## *Proper Breathing for Stress Reduction*

**Oxygen** is the first and most basic necessity of life.

**Stress** is the first and most basic causative factor of muscle tension and pain.

Optimal breathing brings oxygen into your muscles and helps release stress and tension from your body. The result is heightened energy and awareness while reducing the discomforts brought on by improper breathing.

Stress is mirrored in your breath. When you are enduring stress, you tend to breath more shallowly.

The carbon dioxide level in the blood rises and the oxygen level decreases. You start breathing harder so you can rid yourself of carbon dioxide build up. This causes the diaphragm to tense and the abdominal muscles to constrict, preventing you from inhaling deeply and properly. This is called shallow breathing and starts the cycle all over. You are locked in a state of tension until you can begin breathing from your abdomen once more.

The first step in regaining optimal breath, and its benefits, is to become aware of your breathing patterns and to recognize when you are not breathing correctly. Every time you feel yourself become tense, proper breathing can be employed and your sense of well being will begin to improve. Use this breathing technique:

*Lie on your back and place your hands on your stomach. Inhale slowly and deeply, letting your abdomen expand fully with air. You will feel the air rise under your hands. Allow the abdomen to fall as you exhale slowly, at the same time letting go of stress and tension. Repeat inhaling and exhaling slowly and deeply for a minimum of 2 minutes. Work up to 5 minutes at a time.*

Practice this exercise every day, preferably in a quiet place when you can be alone. You should begin to feel calmer and more relaxed when you are done.

*You can take control of your stress through **PROPER BREATHING**.  
Begin today!*

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