

Relaxation or diaphragmatic breathing

This deep breathing technique can help you relax whenever you feel anxious or feel your breathing getting shallower or heavier. It can also be used to slow breathing down when hyperventilating (rapid breathing).

It is slower and deeper than normal breathing, and happens lower in the body (in the belly or abdomen), allowing the lungs to fully expand.

- Relaxation breathing is a skill you will need to learn - techniques should be practised every day to have a more long-term effect.
- Leave an interval of at least 30 minutes after eating as a full stomach can make relaxation more difficult.

- Sit comfortably in a chair if possible.
- Put your feet flat on the floor.
- Shoulders down and jaw loose.
- Back straight.
- Loosen clothes around your stomach area if convenient.
- Put one hand just above your stomach and one on the chest.
- Breathe in through your nose rather than your mouth.
- Your lower hand should move outwards as you breathe in to count of two.
- Hold it for a count of two and then slowly breathe out to count of four, as your lower hand moves inwards.
- Repeat twice and then relax and carry on with whatever you were doing.

Breathing should be obviously from the stomach not the chest as your lungs expand and push your tummy outwards. Try to keep the top hand fairly still. Only the bottom hand should move a lot as your lungs expand. If your top hand is moving more than your bottom your breathing is likely to be more shallow.

Practise three times a day or whenever you feel anxious.

- Take a moment to come back to the present after you carry out any relaxation exercise, and resume your next task slowly.

Try this:

- On the bus.
- At your desk.
- In a supermarket queue.
- Watching television.

Remember! Don't worry - you may not feel much effect at first – it will still be working and it may take time before you feel in a more relaxed state. Keep practising!