



## Relaxed Breathing (Diaphragmatic)

Relaxed breathing may help slow down your breathing and relax muscle tension. It helps promote the relaxation response that can help improve your physical and mental health.

Relaxed 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).

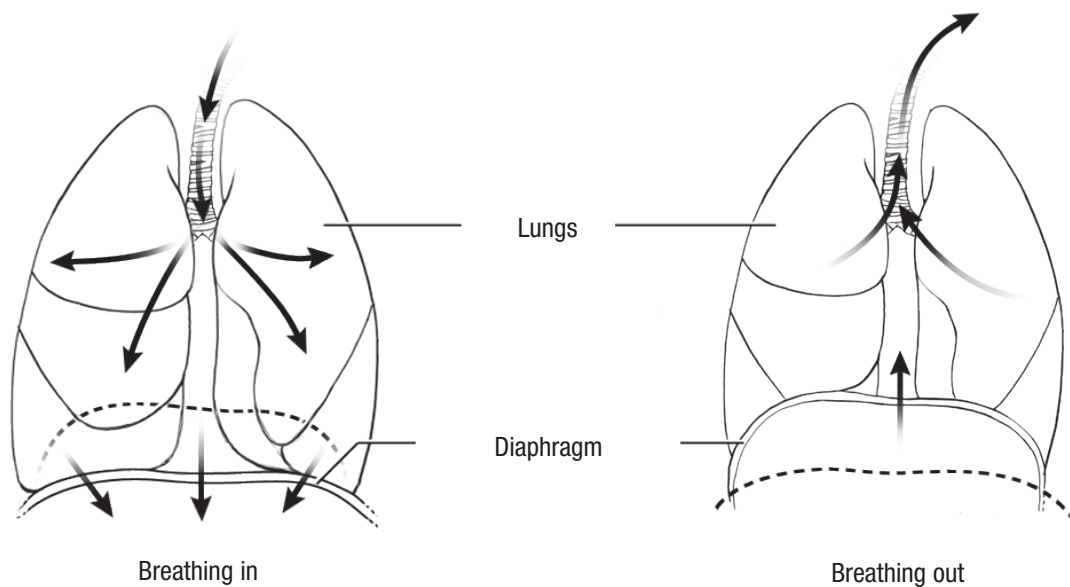


Figure 1.

**Relaxed 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) at your normal rate or slower (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 natural and you can use it as needed.

***If you cannot feel your abdomen expand as you breathe in:***

- Breathe out first and gently push your abdomen with your hand.
- Breathe in, noticing how your abdomen expands against your hand.



Figure 2. Relaxed breathing

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