



# Breathing and Your Health...

## **Chiropractic Treatment, Breathing and Your Health**

*Breathing is an automatic bodily function. Every day we do it up to 20,000 times without a thought, but most of us don't use the full potential of our breathing to feel energised and to keep in good health.*

### **Are you breathing correctly?**

Please take a deep breath! Did your stomach go in or out? This is a simple test to see if you are breathing correctly.

If your stomach went out – good! If it went in – please read on.

Most people breathe only with the top part of the body, which means that they are not fully lowering the diaphragm and expanding the lungs and so are **not** making the **full use** of their **lung capacity**.

This kind of **shallow breathing** is how you breathe if you feel anxious or depressed, it can also induce **stress and tension**; these are contributory factors in many illnesses and diseases.

### **What is the effect of incorrect breathing?**

Limiting your breath to the chest not only **reduces** the potential **intake of oxygen** to the body but also the **diaphragm** remains **tense** leading to **tightness around the aorta**, the main blood vessel in the body. It can also lead to restricted movement around the **large bowel**, making both **high blood pressure** and **constipation** possible.

When you breathe incorrectly you **overuse** the **accessory muscles** of breathing, the muscles of the **neck and shoulders** (sterno-cleido-mastoid and trapezius muscles), which subsequently fatigue and tightens up, leading to **pain and tiredness**.

Breathing properly is particularly important in people with impaired breathing such as asthma and emphysema.

### **Poor Breathing – Poor Posture**

Poor breathing is usually **connected with poor posture**, physical stiffness, tense shoulders, a curved spine and a rigid pelvis, all of which disturb the natural balance of the body. Therefore, when your breathing is out of balance the diaphragm, abdomen and pelvis are also out of balance.

### **Poor Posture – Poor Breathing**

With so many of us becoming more and more **sedentary** in our **lifestyles**, a common **bad posture** seen during sitting is the head forward, with rounded shoulders and a slightly caved-in chest. This posture **stops** the **rib cage opening up** and makes the mid back area tight and often painful.

### **What is the Diaphragm?**

The diaphragm is a **large** sheet of **muscle** that separates the lungs from the abdomen.

When you breathe in your diaphragm contracts, dropping down until it is stopped by the contents of your abdomen. When the downward movement stops the diaphragm continues to contract and this **causes** the lower **ribs to lift and expand**. This increases the size of the thoracic cavity.

If your **abdominal muscles** are **not** very **strong**, the diaphragm cannot work properly. This will also **limit** your **lung capacity**.

### **Important points to remember to help your breathing**

- **Limit** the amount of time that you spend **sitting**
- Watch the **posture** of your **upper back** at all times
- Make sure that your **abdominal** muscles are fairly **strong** and have good tone.

### ***Breathing and Your Health Continued...***

- The most **efficient** way to breathe is by pushing through the abdomen, or the **diaphragm**, as gravity dictates, to encourage the air to go to the bottom of the lungs where the best blood supply is and **oxygen exchange** will occur most efficiently.
- Only through **abdominal breathing** can we access this deep breathing.

If you follow these points and breathe in this way, the diaphragm can move up and down **efficiently**, hence massaging the internal organs below and ensuring that there is good blood circulation.

### **What does our patients say?**

When we explain how to breathe, many of our chiropractic patients find it extraordinary that they didn't know how to breathe properly. Maybe you did to? After all, breathing is something natural that shouldn't have to be taught, isn't it?

The fact remains that **most people breathe incorrectly** and this can have a profound effect on how you feel.

**Our patients are surprised that nobody has ever taught them how to breathe properly before and they are amazed at how much better it makes them feel to breathe correctly.**

### **How can you check the effectiveness of your breathing at home?**

- To check for abdominal breathing, put your hands on your stomach.
- Does it swell when you breathe in and sink when you breathe out? It should.
- Imagine the air going into your lungs like a bottle being filled with water from the bottom up. Breathe from your abdomen first so that your abdomen rise, then your chest, and then up to your shoulders.
- Exhale through the nose and try to empty the lungs completely before taking the next breath.

**Remember, it is very important to have your posture checked regularly by your chiropractor, and to ask for advice about self-help exercises and activities for breathing that you can do at home.**

### **Daily exercises to do at home**

*The Chiropractor at the ISIS Chiropractic Centres recommends the following three exercises for increasing your lung capacity:*

- 1. Rest your hands on your rib cage at the sides, just above the waist, and breathe out completely. Now inhale gently through the nose, letting your abdomen swell, to a count of 5.**
- 2. Continue to breathe in through the nose for another count of 5, this time letting your ribs expand under your hands and finally your chest (but try hard not to raise your shoulders in the process).**
- 3. Hold your breath for a count of 5 then slowly let it out through your mouth as you count slowly to 10, noticing how your rib cage shrinks beneath your hands and pulling in with your abdomen until you have released all the air. Repeat this process 4 times.**

We hope that you find this information helpful. Please feel free to pass it on to who ever you think could benefit from the advice, family and friends.

This information is taken from **our website** and if there is another subject you are interested in why don't you come and have a look.

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**For more information call ISIS Chiropractic Centres or go to**  
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