

## Prevent and relieve asthma, a pre-course guide for children and teens

These breathing exercises can help relieve asthma symptoms and reduce dependence on medication. You can use them to help overcome an asthma attack. If you do them 2-3 times a day, even when you are not having symptoms, they can help prevent your asthma returning.

### Step exercise – breath hold while walking

This is a breathing exercise to help clear a blocked nose and relieve asthma symptoms. It works by increasing the levels of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in airways. CO<sub>2</sub> is a natural bronchodilator, that means it can relax and open the airways making breathing easier. CO<sub>2</sub> is also a natural anti-inflammatory.

1. Stand with shoulders relaxed.
2. Start by breathing gently in and out through the nose.
3. After a normal breath out, hold your breath, lightly pinch the nostrils closed and start walking.
4. Keep walking while holding your breath.
5. When you feel the urge to breathe, release your fingers and inhale through your nose.



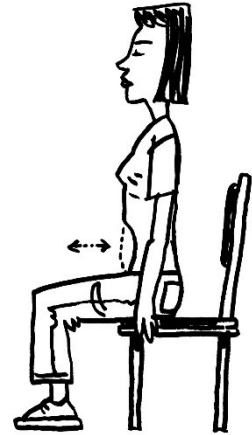
It is okay to take a big breath at the end but try to control your breathing as quickly as possible. You should recover in 2 breaths.

- Keep your mouth closed
- Try to keep your shoulders and belly relaxed
- You can walk or run
- Keep your head up, don't look at the ground

Follow the step exercise with 2-5 minutes of diaphragmatic breathing (over page)

### Diaphragm breathing exercise

1. Sit with upright posture on a stable firm chair.
2. Edge forward so that the 'sitting bones' are positioned near the front edge of the chair. Ensure correct chair height so that upper legs are parallel with the floor, knees directly over the ankles, feet flat on the floor.
3. Maintain this posture while breathing gently and rhythmically through your nose. You should feel a shift of the breathing from the chest to the belly.
4. Try to focus your breathing in the belly keeping it as soft and gentle as you can. There should be almost no movement in the upper chest.
5. Practise quiet "invisible" breathing for 2-5 minutes. One goal of this exercise is to train your body to breathe less air.



### The step and diaphragmatic breathing exercises can be done:

- on waking
- after physical exercise
- before meals or at least 90 minutes after eating
- immediately before bed

### Breathing awareness through the day

- Mouth closed, lips together, breathe through your nose
- Relax shoulders
- Breathe from the tummy

A useful reminder of these points is to place coloured stickers around the house to remind you to close your mouth.

Breathing should be gentle and quiet. You should breathe through your nose up to moderate levels of physical exertion. Remember. Even though you may feel as though you are not getting enough air, more oxygen is getting to your brain and body. This is because more oxygen is delivered to the body when CO<sub>2</sub> levels in airways and blood are optimal.

### **Other points**

- Do not to eat big meals late at night as this can stimulate your breathing and trigger symptoms including blocked nose, cough, breathlessness, or asthma.
- Avoid dairy to reduce mucous and help keep nasal passages clear. Refined carbohydrates including foods and drinks containing white flour and sugar can also aggravate asthma and nasal congestion and should be reduced or avoided completely.

### **Relieve asthma, chest tightness, cough or blocked nose**

The three main components of asthma are:

1. bronchoconstriction (narrowing of airways)
2. airway inflammation
3. mucous impaction

All three of these may combine to bring on an asthma attack.

Use the following strategy to relieve asthma, breathlessness, cough, or a blocked nose.

1. Try to slow your breathing down and, if possible, breathe in and out of the nose
2. Drop your shoulders and maintain an upright posture doing your best to breathe from the belly
3. Do the Step Exercise. Do as many steps as possible but don't push to the point where you need to inhale through your mouth at the end
4. Follow with 2-5 minutes of Reduced Breathing (RB)
5. Repeat if necessary until symptoms are relieved. Continue to breathe in and out through the nose and from the belly

If breathing exercises fail to relieve symptoms, take one puff of your reliever inhaler, preferably in a spacer, and continue the Reduced breathing for a few minutes. You may need a second puff if symptoms are not relieved.

Seek medical assistance if the breathing exercises and or reliever medication fail to relieve asthma symptoms.

If reliever use exceeds 3-4 puffs per week you may need to review your asthma management plan with your doctor.

### **About this guide**

These breathing exercises and guidelines are to help you get started on the path to healthier breathing. They do not constitute all or part of a Buteyko breathing re-training programme. For optimal results we encourage anyone with asthma or another breathing-related disorder to enrol in a Buteyko clinic breathing retraining programme.

**These guidelines do not replace medical advice. Do not make any changes to prescribed medication, dental or sleep aids without first consulting your doctor or specialist.**

If you have any questions about this guide or would like to know more about our programmes please contact us on +64-9-360 6291 or [info@buteykobreathing.nz](mailto:info@buteykobreathing.nz)

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