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Dr Vasant Lad's Pranayama Breathing Exercises

The following breathing exercises are best done on an empty stomach, having had a glass of room temperature water.

The best posture for pranayama is swastikasana. Seated in a cross legged position take the left foot and place the sole between the right calf and thigh. Similarly take the right foot over the opposite leg and place the sole of the foot between the left calf and thigh. Sit with a straight back & with the head in a balanced upright position. Alternatively sit in a simple cross legged position or comfortably, in an upright position on a dining chair.

When pranayama is practiced regularly, there is an increase in oxygen intake, improved circulation, improved digestion and gut motility & improved efficiency of removal of waste products. There is massaging of organs, which improve blood supply and immunity. Every system will be energised, brain function improved, depression eliminated, cholesterol and triglycerides balanced, heart and lung function improved, pancreatic and other hormone activity improved, liver toxicity reduced, kidney and urinary system brought to normal levels. In the case of recuperation after operations and disease pranayama will improve the rate of normalising health. Asthma sufferers will have their symptoms reduced as will hyperthyroid and hypothyroid conditions. Memory and response time will be improved, ears unblocked, sinuses cleared, and blood cleansed. This will lead to improved skin quality, and improved sleeping patterns. Hypertension will be reduced, digestive complaints reduced and general mobility improved. Stress will be relieved and psychoneuroimmunological response improved. Stress induced diseases will become a thing of the past.

In pregnancy, baby will be supplied with improved oxygen and nutrition.

There are many other forms of pranayama, but when these exercises are performed on a daily basis the quality of health and vitality will be greatly improved. This is ancient knowledge and it works. Expect minor improvements within one week, and major improvements from one month onwards.

1 Bhastrika

Breathe deeply in through the nose - expanding the chest and moving the shoulders forward. Sharply expel the air through the nose using the abdominal muscles moving the abdomen backwards. On the last breath make a high pitched humming sound. Do this 30 times, then do **Mahat Bandha** (see below) followed by **Kevala Kumbhaka - resting**–

Mahat Bandha

Breathe out completely, draw the abdominal muscles upward and in towards the spine; draw up the anus and hold it there and drop the head to the chest in a chin lock. Hold for 20 - 30 seconds. Release and allow the breath to return to normal.

2 Kapala Bhati

Expel air through the nostrils sharply using the abdominal muscles. Do this 100 times then do Mahat Bandha and kevala kumbhaka - rest. Return to normal breathing then repeat up to 10 times.

3 Anuloman Viloman - Alternate Nostril Breathing

Raise the right arm, bend the elbow. Fold the index finger and middle finger into the palm. Place the little finger tip in line with the ring finger tip. Place the thumb above the flare of the right nostril. Breathe in through the left nostril. Open the right nostril and close the left nostril with the little and ring finger tips. Breathe out through the right nostril, then breathe in through

the right nostril. Change to the other nostril by closing the right nostril with the right thumb and opening the left nostril. Breathe out through the left nostril, then in through the left nostril. Close the alternative nostril, etc. Do 20 cycles like this and rest. The tongue rests on the palate and the eyes focus between the eyebrows. Repeat 3 times then rest observing the breath returning to normal.

4 Agni Sara

Breathe in deeply then out as far as possible. Draw the abdomen in and upwards towards the diaphragm. Then push the abdomen in and out 10 times without releasing the breath. This is called 'breathless breathing'. Release the breath and allow it to return to normal.

5 Brahmari - The Bumble Bee.

Place the finger tips of the little, ring and middle fingers on the inner eye lid adjoining the nose. Place the index finger tips in line with the eyebrows and adjacent to the third eye. Close the ears with the thumbs. Breathe deeply in through the nose and whilst breathing out slowly, make a humming sound reverberating within the skull. Do this 7 to 17 times.

6 Ujjayi – Breath of Victory

As the right arm is raised toward the ceiling, inhale through the nose making a high pitch sound in the laryngeal area by constricting the epiglottis. At the end of the in-breath bend the elbow, close the right nostril with the right thumb and breathe out sharply through the left nostril. Repeat 7 to 17 times. Allow the breath to return to normal.

7 Udgeeta -

Take a deep breath in through the nose. On the outward breath chant 'Hari Om' and as Om is sounded take the head back and then forwards slowly until the chin touches the chest. Do this up to 14 times, then allow the breath to return to normal.

8 Palming

Rub the palms together until they become hot then place the base of the palm into the eye socket. Keep them there for a short while then move the palms upwards over the face and forehead. Then use the hands to clear the aura around the body.

9 Lion Breath

Place the hands in a claw shape on the knees. Breathe in deeply. On the outward breath stick the tongue out, open the eyes wide and roar. Repeat 3 times.

10 Stretching

Place the hands on the shoulders with elbows pointing upwards. Rotate the elbows clockwise 7 times, and then repeat in anticlockwise direction 7 times.

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